This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

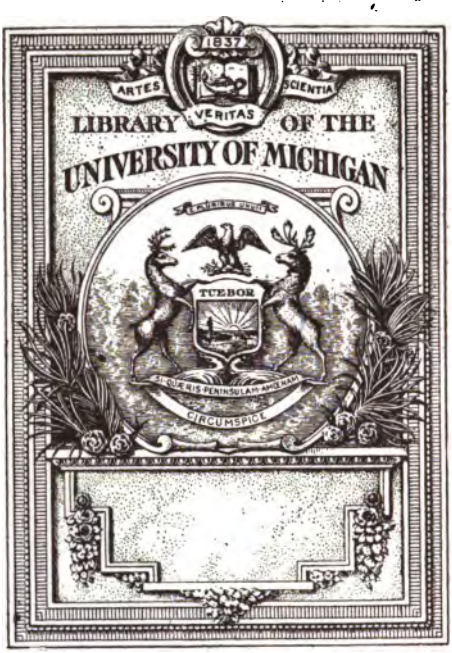
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



Digitized by Google

828
L493t

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TOMMY VISUALIZED THE LONG AND LONELY DAYS OF THE OLD MAN

Digitized by Google

TO THE LAST PENNY

BY

EDWIN LEFEVRE

AUTHOR OF

"WALL STREET STORIES"

"THE PITFALLS"

ETC.

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TO
THE LAST PENNY

BY
EDWIN LEFEVRE
AUTHOR OF
"Wall Street Stories"
"The Plunderers"
ETC.

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Digitized by Google

Books by

EDWIN LEFEVRE

TO THE LAST PENNY Illustrated. Post 8vo.

THE PLUNDERERS. Post 8vo.

WALL STREET STORIES. Post 8vo.

SAMPSON ROCK OF WALL STREET. Illustrated. Post 8vo.

H. R. Illustrated. Post 8vo.

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK
Established 1817

To the Last Penny

Copyright, 1917, by Harper & Brothers
Printed in the United States of America
Published April, 1917
D-R

Digitized by Google

01-29-20EM

TO

BRANDER MATTHEWS

345823

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TO THE LAST PENNY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TO THE LAST PENNY

CHAPTER I

THOMAS LEIGH, ex-boy, considered the dozen neckties before him a long time, and finally decided to wait until after breakfast.

It was his second day at home and his third day out of college. Already his undergraduate life seemed far away. His triumphs—of personality rather than of scholarship—lingered as a luminous mist that softened the sterner realities and mellowed them goldenly. When one is young reminiscences of one's youth are apt to take on a tinge of melancholy, but Tommy, not having breakfasted, shook off the mood determinedly. He was two hundred and fifty-five months old; therefore, he decided that no great man ever crosses a bridge until he comes to it. Tommy's bridge was still one long joy-ride ahead. The sign, "Slow down to four miles an hour!" was not yet in sight.

The selection of the necktie was a serious mat-

Digitized by Google

ter because he was to lunch at Sherry's with the one sister and the younger of the two cousins of Rivington Willetts.

In the mean time he had an invitation to spend the first half of July with Bull Wilson's folks at Gloucester, a week with "Van" Van Schaick for the cruise at Newport, as long as he wished with Jimmy Maitland at Mr. Maitland's camp in the Adirondacks, and he had given a half promise to accompany Ellis Gladwin to Labrador for big game in the fall.

He suddenly remembered that he was at his last ten-spot. There was the Old Man to touch for fifty bucks. And also—sometime—he must have a heart-to-heart talk of a business nature about his allowance. He and his friends desired to take a post-graduate course. They proposed to specialize on New York.

Mr. Leigh always called him Thomas. This had saved Mr. Leigh at least one thousand dollars a year during Tommy's four at college, by making Tommy realize that he had no doting father. At times the boy had sent his requests for an extra fifty with some misgivings—by reason of the impelling cause of the request—but Mr. Leigh always sent the check for the exact amount by return mail, and made no direct reference to it. Instead he permitted himself an irrelevant phrase

Digitized by Google

or two, like, "Remember, Thomas, that you must have no conditions at the end of the term."

Possibly because of a desire to play fair with a parent who had no sense of humor, or perhaps it was because he was level-headed enough not to overwork a good thing, at all events Tommy managed, sometimes pretty narrowly, to escape the conditions. And being very popular, and knowing that quotable wisdom was expected of him, he was rather careful of what he said and did.

He knew nothing about his father's business affairs, excepting that Mr. Leigh was connected with the Metropolitan National Bank, which was a very rich bank, and that he continued to live in the little house on West Twelfth Street, because it was in that house that Mrs. Leigh had lived her seventeen months of married life—it was where Tommy was born and where she died. The furniture was chiefly old family pieces which, without his being aware of it, had made Tommy feel at home in the houses of the very wealthy friends he had made at college. It is something to have been American for two hundred years. Family furniture reminds you of it every day.

Tommy wondered, curiously rather than anxiously, how much his father would allow him, and whether it would be wiser to argue like a man against its inadequacy or to plead like a boy for

Digitized by Google

an increase; then whether he ought to get it in cash Saturday mornings or to have a checking account at his father's bank. But one thing was certain—he would not be led into reckless check-signing habits. His boy-financier days were over. Those of his friends who had multi-millionaire fathers were always complaining of being hard up. It was, therefore, not an unfashionable thing to be. He surmised that his father was not really rich, because he kept no motor, had no expensive personal habits, belonged to no clubs, and never sent to Tommy at college more money than Tommy asked for, and, moreover, sent it only when Tommy asked. Since his Prep-school days Tommy had spent most of his vacations at boys' houses. Mr. Leigh at times was invited to join him, or to become acquainted with the families of Tommy's friends, but he never accepted.

Tommy, having definitely decided not to make any plans until after his first grown-up business talk with his father, looked at himself in the mirror and put on his best serious look. He was satisfied with it. He had successfully used it on mature business men when soliciting advertisements for the college paper.

He then decided to breakfast with his father, who had the eccentric habit of leaving the house at exactly eight-forty A.M.

Digitized by Google

It was actually only eight-eight when Tommy entered the dining-room. Maggie, the elderly chambermaid and waitress, in her twenty-second consecutive year of service, whom he always remembered as the only woman who could be as taciturn as his father, looked surprised, but served him oatmeal. It was a warm day in June, but this household ran in ruts.

Mr. Leigh looked up from his newspaper. "Good morning, Thomas," he said. Then he resumed his *Tribune*.

"Good morning, father," said Tommy, and had a sense of having left his salutation unfinished. He breakfasted in a sober, business-like way, feeling age creeping upon him. Nevertheless, when he had finished he hesitated to light a cigarette. He never had done it in the house, for his father had expressed the wish that his son should not smoke until he was of age. Tommy's twenty-first birthday had come off at college.

Well, he was of age now.

The smell of the vile thing made Mr. Leigh look at his son, frowning. Then he ceased to frown. "Ah yes," he observed, meditatively, "you are of age. You are a man now."

"I suspect I am, father," said Thomas, pleasantly. "In fact, I—"

"Then it is time you heard man's talk!"

Digitized by Google

Mr. Leigh took out his watch, looked at it, and put it back in his pocket with a methodical leisureliness that made Tommy realize that Mr. Leigh was a very old man, though he could not be more than fifty. Tommy was silent, and was made subtly conscious that in not speaking he was somehow playing safe.

"Thomas, I have treated you as a boy during twenty-one years." Mr. Leigh paused just long enough for Tommy to wonder why he had not added "and three months." Mr. Leigh went on, with that same uncomfortable, senile precision: "Your mother would have wished it. You are a man now and—"

He closed his lips abruptly, but without any suggestion of temper or of making a sudden decision, and rose, a bit stiffly. His face took on a look of grim resolution that filled Tommy with that curious form of indeterminate remorse with which we anticipate abstract accusations against which there is no concrete defense. It seemed to make an utter stranger of Mr. Leigh. Tommy saw before him a life with which his own did not merge. He would have preferred a scolding as being more paternal, more humanly flesh-and-blood. He was not frightened.

He never had been wild; at the worst he had been a complacent shirker of future responsibilities,

Digitized by Google

with that more or less adventurous desire to float on the tide that comes to American boys whose financial necessities do not compel them to fix their anchorage definitely. At college such boys are active citizens in their community, concerned with sports and class politics, and the development of their immemorial strategy against existing institutions. And for the same sad reason of youth Tommy could not possibly know that he was now standing, not on a rug in his father's dining-room, but on the top of life's first hill, with a pleasant valley below him—and one steep mountain beyond. All that his quick self-scrutinizing could do was to end in wondering which particular exploit, thitherto deemed unknown to his father, was to be the key-note of the impending speech. And for the life of him, without seeking self-extenuation, he could not think of any serious enough to bring so grimly determined a look on his father's face.

Mr. Leigh folded the newspaper, and, without looking at his son, said, harshly, "Come with me into the library."

Tommy followed his father into the particularly gloomy room at the back of the second floor, where all the chairs were too uncomfortable for any one to wish to read any book there. On the small black-walnut table were the family Bible,

Digitized by Google

an ivory paper-cutter, and a silver frame in which was a fading photograph of his mother.

"Sit down!" commanded the old man. There was a new note in the voice.

Tommy sat down, the vague disquietude within him for the first time rising to alarm. He wondered if his father's mind was sound, and instantly dismissed the suspicion. It was too unpleasant to consider, and, moreover, it seemed disloyal. Tommy was very strong on loyalty. His college life had given it to him.

Mr. Leigh looked, not at his son but at the photograph of his son's mother, a long time it seemed to Tommy. At length he raised his head and stared at his son.

Tommy saw that the grimness had gone. There remained only calm resolve. Knowing that the speech was about to begin, Tommy squared his shoulders. He would answer "Yes" or "No" truthfully. He wasn't afraid now.

"Thomas, the sacrifices I have made for you I do not begrudge," said Mr. Leigh, in a voice that did not tremble because an iron will would not let it. "But it is well that you should know once for all that you can never repay me in full. You are my only son. But—you cost me your mother!"

Tommy knew that his mother had paid for his

Digitized by Google

life with her own—knew it from Maggie, not from his father. To Tommy love and loyalty were among the undoubted pleasures of life. Recriminations he looked upon as evidences of a shabby soul. He repressed the desire to defend himself against injustice and loyally said, "Yes, sir!"

His father went on, "I have kept also an accurate account of what you have cost me in cash."

Mr. Leigh went to his desk and took from a drawer a small book bound in morocco. He came back to the table, sat down, motioned Tommy to a chair beside him, opened the book at the first page, and showed Tommy:

THOMAS FRANCIS LEIGH,
In acct. with William R. Leigh, Dr.

Tommy felt that he was at the funeral services of some one he knew. His father seemed to hesitate, then handed the little book to Tommy. The morocco cover was black—the color of mourning.

Mr. Leigh went on in the voice a man will use when he is staring not through space, but across time: "Before you were born we were sure you would be a boy. She formed great plans for you.

Digitized by Google

It is just as well that she did; it gave her the only happiness she ever got from you." He raised his eyes to Tommy's, and with a half frown that was not of anger, said: "She was very extravagant in her gifts to you. She spent money lavishly, months before you were born, on what she thought you would love to have—large sums, all on paper, for we were very poor and had no money whatever to put aside for the day when you should need it. She told me many times that she did not wish you to have brothers or sisters, because she already loved you so much that she felt she could never love the others, and it would not be fair." The old, old man paused. Then he added, softly, "She had her wish, my son!"

Tommy felt very uncomfortable. His mother was coming to life in his heart. What for years had been a faint convention was now dramatizing in blood and tears before his very eyes. He felt more like a son than ever before, and—this was curious!—more like a son to his own father. And his own father continued in a monotone:

"But being a bookkeeper at a bank and being very, very poor, the only inexpensive recreation I could think of was to keep your books for you. So I debited you with every penny I spent for you. You will find that the first item in that

Digitized by Google

book was a lace cap which she bought for you at a special sale, for $2.69. I didn't scold her for extravagance. Instead, I gave up smoking. And —I have kept the cap, my son!"

Tommy looked down, that he might not see his father's face. He read the first item. The ink was pale, but the writing was legible. It was as his father had said. And there were other items, all for baby clothes. He read them one after another, dully, until he came to:

Doctor Wyman	$218.50
Funeral expenses in full	191.15

The old man seemed to know, in some mysterious way, which particular item Tommy was reading, for he said, suddenly, with a subtle note of apology in his voice:

"I loved her, my son! I loved her! You cost me her life! You did not do it intentionally. But—but I felt you owed me something, and so I —charged you with the expense incurred. She would have—fought for you; but I held it against you and I wrote it down. And I wrote it down, in black and white, that in my grief I might have an added grief, my son!"

Tommy looked up suddenly, and saw that his father was nodding toward the photograph on the table, nodding again and again. And Tommy felt-

Digitized by Google

himself becoming more and more a son—to both! He did not think concretely of any one thing, but he felt that he was enveloped by a life that does not die. That, after all, is the function of death.

Presently Mr. Leigh ceased to nod at the photograph and looked at Tommy. And in the same dispirited monotone, as though his very soul had kept books for an eternity, said:

"We talked over your life, my son. Months before you came she picked out your schools and your college. It is to those that you have gone. She had no social ambitions for herself. They were all for you. She wanted you to be the intimate of those whom we called the best people in those days. They are your friends to-day. I promised her that I would do as she wished." The old man looked at Tommy straight in the eyes. "You have had everything you wished—at least, everything you ever asked me for. I have kept my promise to her. And, my son, I do not begrudge the cost!"

The way he looked when he said this made Tommy exceedingly uncomfortable. It was plain that Mr. Leigh was much poorer than Tommy had feared. In some way not quite fully grasped, Tommy Leigh realized that all his plans—the plans he really had not formed!—were brought to naught. And when his father spoke again

Digitized by Google

Tommy listened with as poignant an interest as before, but with distinctly less curiosity.

"Her plans for you all were for your boyhood. After your graduation from college I was to take charge of your business career, provide or suggest or approve of your life's occupation. The day is here. I owe you an explanation, that you may be helped to a decision following your understanding of your position—and of mine!" He ceased to speak, rose, took from the table the photograph of his wife, looked at it, and muttered, "It is now between us men!"

He carried the photograph to his bedroom. He returned presently and, looking at Tommy full in the face, said with a touch of sternness that had been absent from his voice while the photograph was on the table:

"My son, when we married I was getting exactly eighteen dollars a week. Your grandmother lived with us and paid the rent of this house, in return for which she had her meals with us. When you were born I was getting one thousand and forty dollars a year. This house—the only house in which she lived with me—I kept after she died and after your grandmother went away. I do not own it. It is too big for my needs—and too small for my regrets. But I could not live anywhere else. And so I have kept it all these years

Digitized by Google

My salary at the bank was raised to fifteen hundred dollars when you were four years old, and later to eighteen hundred dollars. For the last fourteen years my salary from the bank has been twenty-five hundred dollars a year."

Tommy felt as if something as heavy as molten lead and as cold as frozen air had been force-pumped into his heart and had filled it to bursting.

"You have cost me, up to this day, a trifle over seventeen thousand dollars. At school you cost me a little less than my salary. At college you spent one thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight dollars for your Freshman, two thousand and twelve dollars for your Sophomore, two thousand one hundred and forty-six dollars for your Junior, and two thousand three hundred and ninety-one dollars for your Senior year. Your summer vacation expenses have added an average of four hundred dollars a year to what you cost me since you were sixteen. But I have kept my promise to her. I do not begrudge the cost!"

There was a subtle defiance in the old man's voice, and also a subtle accusation. To Tommy his father's arithmetic had in it something not only incomprehensible, but uncanny. The old man looked as if he expected speech from his son, so Tommy stammered uncomfortably:

"I—I suppose—your s-savings—"

Digitized by Google

The grim lines came back to the old man's mouth. "I had the house rent to pay, and my salary was what I have told you."

"I don't quite understand—" floundered Tommy.

"You have had the college and the friends she wished you to have. When you asked for money I always sent it to you. I asked no questions and urged no economies."

"I had no idea—" began Tommy, and suddenly ceased to talk. There came a question into his eyes. The past was over and done with. There remained the future. What was expected of him? What was he to do?

But the old man missed the question. All he saw was an interrogation, and he said, "You wish to know how I did it?"

This was not at all what Tommy really wished to know, but he nodded, for, after all, his father's answer would be one of the many answers to one of the many questions he had to ask.

"My son"—Mr. Leigh spoke in a low voice, but looked unflinchingly at his son—"I ask you, as a grown man, what does an old and trusted bank employee always do who spends much more than his salary?"

Tommy's soul became a frozen mass, numb, immobile. Then a flame smote him full in the

Digitized by Google

face, so intense that he put up his hands to protect it. He stared unseeingly at his father. There flashed before him ten thousand cinematograph nightmares that fleeted by before he could grasp the details. He felt a slight nausea. He feared to breathe, because he was afraid to find himself alive.

"Father!" he gasped.

Mr. Leigh's face was livid. He said, sternly, "I have kept my promise to her!"

"But why did you—why did you—keep me at college? Why didn't you tell me you had no money?"

"I did as she wished me to do. Believe me, my son, I am not sorry. But it need not go on."

"No!" shouted Tommy. "No!" Then he added, feverishly: "Certainly not! Certainly not!" He shook his head furiously. His brain was filled with fragments of thoughts, shreds of fears, syncopated emotions that did not quite crystallize, but were replaced by others again and again. But uppermost in the boy's mind, not because he was selfish but because he was young and, therefore, without the defensive weapons that experience supplies, was this: I am the son of a thief!

Then came the poignant realization that all that he had got from life had been obtained under

Digitized by Google

false pretenses. The systematic stealing for years had gone to pay for his friendships and his good times. The tradesmen's bills had been settled with other people's money. He was innocent of any crime, but he had been the beneficiary of one. And the boy for whom a father had done this asked himself why his father had done it. And his only answer was that he now was the son of a thief.

As the confusion in his mind grew less explosive, fear entered Tommy's soul — the oldest of all civilized fears, the fear of discovery! He began to read the newspaper head-lines of the inevitable to-morrow. He found himself looking into the horror-stricken faces of those whom he loved best, the warm-hearted companions of his later life, whose opinions became more awful than the wrath of his Maker and more desirable than His mercy.

He would give his life, everything, if only discovery were averted until he could return the money. If fate only waited! Where could he get the money? Where was the source of money?

His father was the natural person from whom to ask, from whom the answer would come, and the habit of a lifetime could not be shaken off in an instant. It was exquisite agony to be deprived abruptly of what had become almost an instinct,

Digitized by Google

And Tommy was not thinking of his father, not even to blame him, not even to forgive him. He thought of himself, of his own life, of the dreadful future that settled itself into the words: "If it were known!"

"What shall I do?" he muttered, brokenly, gazing at his father with eyes that did not see one face, but many—the faces of friends!

"At your age I went to work," said Mr. Leigh. The voice was neither accusing nor sympathetic. It sounded very, very weary.

"I want to! I want to! Right away!" cried Tommy, loudly.

"I looked," pursued Mr. Leigh, monotonously, "in the *Herald* for 'Help Wanted—Male.' I got my position with the bank that way, and I've been there ever since."

"I will! Where is the *Herald?*" said Tommy, without looking at his father. He was afraid to see and to be seen.

"I'll send in one from the corner. I must go now, Thomas."

The fear of being left alone, with his problems unsolved, with his fears uncalmed, alone with the consciousness of utter helplessness, made Tommy say, wildly:

"But, father, I— You— I—" He ceased to flounder. It was not pleasant to look upon his

Digitized by Google

young face, pallid, drawn, with the nostrils pinched as with physical pain, and fear made visible, almost palpable, in ten thousand ways.

"I must go! I must be in the bank—before the cashier. I—I—I have done it since—since you went to Prep.-School." The old man nodded his head with a pitiful weariness.

"But, father—" cried Tommy.

"I must go!" There was a pause. Then in a firmer voice: "Don't lose your grip, my son. I alone am responsible for my actions. I have done my duty by her. From now on you must fight your own fights. I'll send in the *Herald*. And, my son—"

"Yes?" said Tommy, eagerly. What he prayed for was a miracle. He wished to hear that there was no immediate danger.

"You will need some pocket mo—"

"No! No!" shrieked Tommy Leigh. His voice was shrill as a little boy's.

Mr. Leigh's fists, unseen by Tommy, clenched tightly. But his voice had an apologetic note. "Very well, my son. I—I must be in the bank before— You must be a man. Good-by, my son!"

Without another look at his only son Mr. Leigh walked out of the room, his face grim, his lips pressed tightly together, his fists clenching and unclenching.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

MAGGIE brought the *Herald* to Tommy. He had remained in the library, trying to think. When he discovered that he couldn't he rose and walked about the gloomy little room, angry with himself because his emotions prevented the cogs of his mind-machine from falling into their appointed places. He decided that he must face his problem squarely, systematically, calmly, efficiently.

The first thing to do was not to walk about the library like a wild beast in a menagerie cage. He lit a cigarette and resolutely sat down.

He smoked away, and compelled himself to understand that his problem consisted in evolving a plan or a set of plans having for an object the accumulation of money. The amount was seventeen thousand dollars, since that was what he had cost his father. It was there in black and white, to the last penny, in the little book bound in mourning morocco.

He stretched his hand toward the little book on the table, but drew it back, empty. He would not read the items. It didn't matter how the money

Digitized by Google

had been spent. It was enough to know that all of it must be paid back.

Seventeen thousand dollars! It did not mean any more to Tommy than five thousand dollars or ten thousand dollars or any other number of dollars.

He lit another cigarette. Presently the fear came upon him that it might take a long time to earn the money, to earn any money. Discovery, the discovery he so dreaded, had fleet feet. He must do something—and do it at once.

He took up the *Herald* and read the "Help Wanted—Male" column. He began at the first line, and as he read on he was filled with surprise at the number of men wanted by employers. He marked two private secretaryships and a dozen selling agencies, which divulged no details, but promised great and quick wealth to the right man. He knew that he would work like a cyclone. He, therefore, must be the right man. In fact, he knew he was! And then he came upon this:

WANTED—A College Man. No high-brow, no football hero, no Happy Jack, no erudite scholar, but a MAN recently graduated from College, whose feet are on *terra firma* and the head not more than six feet one inch above same. If he is a MAN to-day we shall make him into THE MAN WE WANT to-morrow. Apply X-Y-Z, P. O. Box 777, Dayton, Ohio.

Thomas Leigh thrilled. It was a wonderful message. He clenched his own fist to prove to

Digitized by Google

himself that he himself was a man. He was willing to do anything, therefore it did not matter what "X-Y-Z" wanted him to do. And also this was in Dayton, Ohio. Whatever he did must be done far away from New York. He hated New York because all the people he loved lived there.

He was about to light another cigarette when the thought came to him that smoking was one of the habits he must give up as entailing unnecessary expense. Unnecessary expenses meant delay in the full settlement of the debt he had taken upon himself to pay. He threw the unlighted cigarette on the table vindictively. He would work at anything, night and day, like a madman!

Thrilled by the intensity of his own resolve, his mind began to work feverishly. He was no longer Tommy Leigh, but a man who did his thinking in staccato exclamations. He sat down at his father's desk and wrote what he could not have written the day before to save his life, for he now saw himself as the man in Dayton evidently saw him.

X-Y-Z, DAYTON, OHIO:

Sir,—I graduated from college last week. I am a twenty-one-year-old man now. I will be *your* Man until I shall be my own Man—and then *perhaps* yours also. Ego plus Knowledge equals Xnth.

THOMAS LEIGH,
West Twelfth Street,
New York City.

Digitized by Google

He addressed the envelope, stamped it, and went out to drop it at the corner letter-box. He did not intend to lose time. He realized, as firmly as if he had been writing business aphorisms for a living, that time was money. And he needed both.

As soon as the letter was in the box he felt that his life's work had begun. This lifted a great weight from his chest. He now could breathe deeply. He did so. The oxygen filled his lungs. That brought back composure—he was doing all he could. The consciousness of this gave him courage.

Courage has an inveterate habit of growing. By feeding on itself it waxes greater, and thus its food-supply is never endangered. By the time Tommy Leigh returned to his house, once the abode of fear, he was so brave that he could think calmly. Thinking calmly is always conducive to thinking forgivingly, and forgiveness strengthens love.

"Poor old dad!" he said, and thought of how his father had loved his mother and what he had done for his only son. He would stick to his father through thick and thin.

That much settled, Tommy thought of himself. That made him think of the luncheon at Sherry's with Rivington Willetts. Marion Willetts would

Digitized by Google

be there. For a moment he thought he must beg off. It was like going to a cabaret in deep mourning. But he reasoned that since he was going to Dayton, this would be his social swan-song, the leave-taking of his old life, his final farewell to boyhood and Dame Pleasure.

He was glad he had told his father he would not accept any more money. He counted his cash. He had eleven dollars and seventy cents. He was glad he had so little. It cheered him so that he was able to dress with great care; but before he did so he answered some of the other advertisements.

At the luncheon he was a pleasant-faced chap, well set-up, with an air of youth rather than of juvenility, as though he were a young business man. If he had not come naturally by it this impression of business manhood might have degenerated into one of those unfortunate assumptions of superiority that so irritate in the young because the old know that age is nothing to be proud of, age with its implied wisdom being the most exasperating of all fallacies.

With Tommy the impression of grown manhood imparted to his chatter a quality of good fellowship deliberately put on out of admirable sympathy for young people who very properly did not desire to be bored. A nice chap, who could

Digitized by Google

be trusted to be a stanch friend in comedy or tragedy! The girls even thought he was interesting!

He heard his chum Willetts gaily discuss plans for the summer, all of which necessitated Mr. Thomas Leigh's presence at certain friendly houses. But he said nothing until after the luncheon was over and the talk had begun to drag desultorily, as it does when guests feel "good-by" before they say it.

"Well," said Tommy, smiling pleasantly after the pause that followed Marion's beginning to button a glove, "you might as well hear it now as later. It will save postage. I am not going to see you after to-day!"

"What!" cried Rivington.

"That!" said Tommy. "My father told me this morning that there was nothing doing for me in finance."

"Oh, they always tell you business is rotten," said Rivington, reassuringly. His own father, with hundreds of tenanted houses, always talked that way.

"Yes, but this time it's so."

"Oh!" exclaimed Marion, in distress, "did you talk back to—"

"My child, no harsh words passed my lips nor his. I received honey with quinine from old

Digitized by Google

Doctor Fate. The father of your dear friend is down to cases. The stuff simply isn't there; so it's me for commerce and industry."

"What the heavens are you shooting at, Tommy?"

"In plain English, it means that I've got to go to work, earn my own cigarette money, cut my fastidious appetite in two, and hustle like a squirrel in a peanut warehouse. I'm going to Dayton, Ohio."

"Oh, Tommy!" said Marion. She had ceased to fumble with her gloves, and was looking at young Mr. Leigh with deep sympathy and a subtle admiration.

Tommy was made aware of both by the relatively simple expedient of looking into her eyes. The conviction came upon him like a tidal wave that this was the finest girl in the world. He shared his great trouble with her, and that made her his as it had made him hers.

She was overpoweringly beautiful!

Then came the reaction. It could never be! Calmly stated, she knew that he was going to do a man's work. But she did not know why, nor why he must leave New York. He turned on her a pair of startled, fear-filled eyes.

She became serious as by magic. "What is it?" she whispered.

Digitized by Google

The low tones brought her very close to him. Tommy wished to have no secrets from her, but he could not tell her. She read his unwillingness with the amazing intuition of women. Their relations subtly changed with that exchange of glances.

"I—I can't tell you—all the—the reasons," he stammered, feeling himself helpless against the drive of something within him that insisted on talking. "I can't!" He paused, and then he whispered, pleadingly, "And you mustn't ask me!"

If she insisted he would confess, and he mustn't.

"I wish I had the nerve," broke in Rivington, his voice dripping admiration and regret. "Tommy, you are some person, believe me!"

Tommy had forgotten that Rivington was present. He turned to his friend now. In his eyes, as in the eyes of the girl, Tommy saw hero-worship. This unanimity made Tommy feel very like his own portrait painted by the friendship of Rivington Willetts, Esquire.

"Oh, pshaw!" he said, modestly. "I've got to do it. I wouldn't if I didn't have to."

"Yes, you would," contradicted Marion, positively.

He in turn was too polite to contradict her. But a moment later, when they shook hands at

Digitized by Google

parting, he made his trusty right convey in detail his acknowledgment that she knew everything. He was absolutely certain she would understand the speech he had not expressed in the words he had so carefully selected to speak silently with.

Rivington made him promise to dine at the College Club that evening. A lot of the fellows would surely be there. Tommy went—the more willingly because he could not bear to talk to his father about the one subject that seemed inevitable between them. And, moreover, while he did not intend to talk about it with his comrades, he had always discussed everything else with them for four years. Their presence would help to make his own silence tolerable to himself.

The most curious thing in the world happened. Instead of expressing sympathy for Mr. Thomas Leigh's financial reverses, all of the boys offered him nothing but congratulations on his pluck, his resolve, and his profound philosophy. He felt himself elected by acclamation to a position as the oldest and wisest of the greatest class in history, the first of them all to become a man.

The majority of his intimates were sons of millionaires, with not a snob among them, the splendid democracy of their college having decreed that snobbery was the unpardonable crime.

Digitized by Google

But it was plain that none of them ever had expected labor to fall to his lot. Now they felt certain of his success. They gravely discussed methods for winning fame and fortune, and were not only profound, but even cynical at times. They had quite a store of maxims which they called the right dope. When they asked him what he was going to do he smiled mysteriously and shook his head. He did this purely in self-defense. But they said he was a deep one.

He left them, immensely comforted. It was only when he was in his room an hour later, trying to go to sleep, that the grim reality of his tragedy came to him. What, he asked himself bitterly, could he do? He was almost helpless in the grasp of the terrible monster called the world. His hands were tied—almost in handcuffs.

The thought made him close his teeth tightly. He would do it somehow. Fate had torn from his bleeding heart the right to have friends. He would regain the right. He fell asleep while in this fighting mood.

When Tommy walked into the dining-room the next morning to have breakfast with his father, he was surprised to find himself wondering over the particular form of salutation. He desired his father to know what his plans were and what caused them. And also his loyalty must be made

Digitized by Google

plain. Therefore, he said with a cheerfulness he could not help exaggerating:

"Good morning, dad!"

Mr. Leigh looked up quickly, almost apprehensively, at his only son. Then he looked away and said, very quietly, "Good morning, my son."

There was an awkward pause. Mr. Leigh could not see the smile of loyalty that Tommy had forced his lips to show for his father's special benefit. So Tommy decided that he must encourage Mr. Leigh verbally. He said, with a brisk sort of earnestness:

"Well, I answered several ads in the *Herald*. This is the one I particularly like."

He took from his pocket the Dayton call and gave it to Mr. Leigh.

Mr. Leigh took it with so pitiful an eagerness that Tommy felt very sorry for him. When he finished reading Mr. Leigh frowned. Tommy wondered why.

Presently the old man asked, almost diffidently, "Do you think you—you can meet the expected requirements?"

Tommy's entire life-to-be passed pageant-like before his mind's eye in a twinkling. The banners were proudly borne by Tommy's emotions; and Tommy's resolve to do what he must was the drum-major.

Digitized by Google

"Sure thing!" answered Tommy. He felt the false note in his reply even before he saw the change that came over his father's face. "Yes, sir," pursued Mr. Thomas Leigh, in a distinctly middle-aged voice. "I don't know what he wants, but I know what I want. And if I want to be a man and he wants me to be one, I can't see what's to hinder either of us. My boy days are over, and I have got to pay back—I'm going to do what I can to show I appreciate your"—here Tommy gulped—"the sacrifices you've made for me. And—oh, father!" Tommy ceased to speak. He couldn't help it.

Mr. Leigh's face took on the grim look Tommy could never forget, and his voice was harsh.

"I have made no sacrifice for you. What your mother wished you to have I have seen to it that you had. You owe me no thanks."

There was a long pause. Tommy didn't break it, because he did not know what to say. And the reason was that he couldn't say all the things he wished to say. But presently the old man said, gently:

"My son, I—I should like to shake hands with you."

Tommy would have been happier if he could have thrown his arms about his mother's neck and told her his craving to comfort himself by

Digitized by Google

being comforted. But he rose quickly, grasped his father's hand, and shook it vehemently. He kept on shaking it, gripping it very tightly the while and gulping as he shook, until Mr. Leigh said:

"I'll be going now, Thomas. I must be at the bank before the—"

Tommy dropped his father's hand very suddenly.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

AFTER his father left Tommy sat in the dining-room. The *Herald* lay unopened beside his plate, but he knew without trying that he could not read. Presently he found that he could not sit quietly. He went out of the house, that he might not think about the one thing that he could not help thinking about. Thinking about it did not end the trouble. But on the street he found that he did not wish to see front stoops or shop windows, so he decided to walk in the park. There, surrounded by the new green growth of grass and trees, he might be able to think of his own new life, the life that was beginning to bud out.

He thought about it without words, for that was the way his mind worked. And it was not long before he began to take notice of the sun-loving nurses and the blinking babies—human beings enjoying the azure smiles of the sky.

A girl on horseback cantered by. He looked up. Through the sparse fringe of bushes that

Digitized by Google

screened off the bridle path from the nurses' favorite benches he saw Marion Willetts on a beautiful black. She also saw him and reined up suddenly, as though he had commanded her to halt. He walked toward her with outstretched hands. She urged her horse toward him with a smile.

"Why, Tommy, I thought you—"

She had never before called him Tommy, as though that were his own particular name, that differentiated him from all other Tommies.

"I am waiting for a letter," he explained at once, without going through the formality of inquiring after her health, because he knew now that he did not wish to go away. That made his departure the one important thing in the world. Then, by one of those subtle reactions that often afflict the young and healthy, the necessity of it became more urgent. He must go to work far away from New York! And the second reaction, circling back to his starting-point: To go away from the pleasant things of New York meant a renunciation so tremendous that he felt himself entitled to much credit. And that made him look quite serious. And that made him smile the smile of the dead game sport who will not lie about it by laughing boisterously.

There was a silence as they shook hands. Neither knew what to say. Perhaps that is why

Digitized by Google

they took so long to shake hands. He knew that she did not know the tragedy of his life, and so did she. It gave them a point of contact.

Finally she said, "I wish you had a horse so we could—"

He shook his head and smiled. The smile made her feel the completeness of Tommy's tragedy. Details were unnecessary; in fact, it was just as well that she did not know them. It was all she could stand as it was.

He had to speak. He said: "I wish so, too, Marion," using her name for the first time, reverently. "But I—I mustn't."

"I'm so sorry, Tommy," she murmured.

"Oh, well—" he said. Her horse began to show signs of impatience. It made him ask, hastily, but very seriously: "I'd like to— May I write to you, Marion?"

"Will you, Tommy? Of course you will. Won't you?"

There was not time for flippancy. He said, "Yes." There were a million things he wished to tell her. He selected the first, "Thank you, Marion."

"D-don't m-mention it," she said, reassuringly.

He almost heard a voice crying, "All ashore that's goin' ashore!" It made him say, hurriedly: "Good-by, Marion. You're a brick!"

Digitized by Google

"It's you who are one," she said.

He held out his hand. "Good-by!" he said again, and looked straight into her eyes.

She looked away and said: "G-good-by, Tommy! Good luck!"

"Thanks! I'll—I'll write!" And he turned away quickly. This compelled him to relinquish the gauntleted little hand he was gripping so tightly. The steel chain thus having snapped, he walked away and did not look back.

The fight had begun. His first battle was against his own desire to turn his head and catch one more glimpse of her, to memorize her face. He won! And in the hour of his first victory he felt very lonely.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

IT was in that mood that he decided to go home. The little house on West Twelfth Street was the abode of misery. So much the better.

He found some letters and a telegram waiting for him. He opened the telegram, certain that it was an urgent invitation to join beloved merry-makers—an invitation that he declined in advance with much self-pity He read:

Ask for Thompson.

It was signed:

TECUMSEH MOTOR COMPANY.

He then saw that it came from Dayton, Ohio. The other letters were from some of the other *Herald* advertisers. All but one were cordial requests for his immediate services—and capital. The last asked for more details about the business experience of Mr. Thomas F. Leigh.

They did not interest him. He was too full of his romantic experiences. The Dayton man was a hero—a MAN! Tommy must become one.

Digitized by Google

He saw very clearly that he must add ten years to his life.

He did it!

Then it became obvious that he must transform his hitherto juvenile mind into a machine, beautifully geared, perfectly lubricated, utterly efficient. Since machines express themselves in terms of action and accomplishment, Tommy began to pack up.

His wearing apparel did not bother him, save for a passing regret that he had no old clothes to be a mechanic in. But the succeeding vision of overalls calmed him. What meant a second fight was the problem of living in Dayton in a room which he must not decorate with the treasured trophies of his college life. It was to a battle-field that he was going. He took out of his trunk many of the cherished objects and prepared to occupy a bomb-proof shelter instead of a cozy room. Second victory! And it was an amazing thing, but when Mr. Leigh came home that evening he found in his son no longer a boy of twenty-one, but a young man.

The sight of the father, whose tragedy was now his son's, gave permanence to the change in the son. Tommy had passed the stage of regrets and entered into the hope of fair play. Fate must give him a sporting chance. He did not ask for the

Digitized by Google

mischief to be undone suddenly and miraculously; nothing need be wiped out; he asked only that time might be given, a little time, until he could pay back that money. And if he couldn't win, that he might have one privilege—to die fighting. His father was his father. And the son's work would be the work of a son in everything. Fairness, justice—and a little delay!

Tommy shook hands with his father a trifle too warmly, but he smiled pleasantly. "I'm leaving to-night on the nine-fourteen train, father." He had studied the time-tables and he had solved the perplexing problem of how to raise the money to pay for the ticket. He had borrowed it from two of the friends with whom he had lunched at the club. It wasn't very much, but he wanted it to be clean money.

Mr. Leigh looked surprised. Tommy felt the alarm and he hastened to explain. "It's the Dayton man," he said, and he handed the telegram to his father.

Mr. Leigh kept his eyes on the yellow slip long enough to read the brief message two hundred times. At length he looked up and met his son's eyes. He made an obvious effort to speak calmly.

"Have you thought carefully, Thomas? You know nothing about this man or the character of the work. It may mean merely a waste of time."

Digitized by Google

"I know that I want to work."

"Yes, but it ought to be work that you are competent to do."

"I am not competent to do any work that calls for experience and training. I have to learn, no matter where I go, and so— Father, I've got to pay back what you have—spent for me! I must! It will take time, but I'll do it, and the sooner I start, the better I'll feel."

Mr. Leigh looked at his son steadily, searchingly, almost hungrily. Then the old man's gaze wavered and indecision came into his eyes. "Thomas, I—"

"I'll write you, father." Tommy looked away, his father's face had grown haggard so suddenly.

He heard the old man say, "You must take enough money to pay for your return in case you find the work uncongenial."

"I won't find any work uncongenial," said Tommy, very positively. He knew!

"One can never tell, my son. It is wise to be prepared. I will give you—"

"No, no, father!" Then Tommy said, determinedly, "I cannot take any money from you." He looked at his father full in the eye.

Mr. Leigh hesitated. Then he asked: "How do you expect to go? You can't walk."

Digitized by Google

"No," said Tommy, without anger; "I borrowed fifty dollars from friends."

Mr. Leigh turned his head away. Then he walked out of the room.

They had very little to say to each other at dinner. It was after Tommy had ordered a taxi to take him and his trunk—if it had not been for the trunk he would not have dreamed of spending so much—to the station that Mr. Leigh said:

"Thomas, I wish to explain to you—"

"No, dad, please don't! There was such pain in the boy's voice that Mr. Leigh took a step toward him. Tommy was suffocating.

"My son, there is no need of your feeling that you—"

"I don't! I understand perfectly!" Tommy shook his head—without looking at his father.

Mr. Leigh walked out of the room. Tommy took a step toward him and halted abruptly—something was choking him. He began to pace up and down the room, dreading the news of the arrival of the taxi and yet desiring it above all things.

Presently Mr. Leigh returned. He had in his hand a little package. He gave it to Tommy, who took it mechanically.

"My son," said Mr. Leigh, in a low voice, "your uncle Thomas gave this to your mother—

Digitized by Google

one hundred dollars in gold. She kept it for you. She wrote on it, 'For Tommy's first scrape.' It is not my money. It was hers. It is yours. Take it—for your first scrape. And, my son—" The old man's speech seemed to fail him. Presently he went on: "You are in no scrape. Your mother— Well, I have done my duty as I saw it. And, Thomas—"

"Yes, sir."

"Remember that I am your father and that there is no wisdom in unnecessary privations. You are not called upon to expiate my—my weakness of character. If ever you find yourself suffering actual want—"

Tommy couldn't say what his pride urged. Instead he told his father, "I'll wire for help if I really need it, dad." Having said what he did not think he would ever do, he made up his mind that he would take money dripping with the blood of slaughtered orphans rather than increase this old man's unhappiness.

"Thank you, my son," said the old man, very simply.

"A nautomobile is out there waiting," announced Maggie.

"Tell the man to take the trunk," Tommy told her. Then to the old man: "Well, dad, it's good-by now. I'll write—often." He held out his hand.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Leigh came toward his son. His face was grim but his outstretched hand trembled. "Good-by, my son! Good-by." He grasped both Tommy's hands in his and gripped them tightly. Then his voice broke and he said, huskily: "My son! My son!"

"Dad!" said Tommy, his eyes full of tears. "Oh, dad! It will be all right! It's all right!"

Mr. Leigh released his son's hands and walked away.

Maggie came in and said, "Good-by, Master Thomas."

"Good-by, Maggie," said Tommy. Then he threw his arms about her neck and kissed her on her cheeks. "Take care of him, Maggie. If—anything happens telegraph me. I'll send you my address."

"What can happen? He's as strong as he ever was," said Maggie, calmly.

Tommy went up-stairs to the library, where he was sure his father had gone. Through the open door he saw his father pacing up and down the room. He was shaking his head as men do when they are arguing with themselves, and his hands were clenching and unclenching spasmodically.

Thomas F. Leigh turned on his heels and walked down the stairs very quietly. He had entered into his new life. It was a life of bitter loneliness.

Digitized by Google

He could have no friends, because his secret could not be shared. He felt the loneliness in advance. It almost overwhelmed him.

In the hall, as his hand grasped the knob of the street door, without knowing that he craved to hear the sound of a living voice in order to dispel the stifling silence that enveloped his soul, Tommy Leigh said, aloud:

"It's up to me to make good!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

WHEN Tommy arrived in Dayton he found his secret waiting for him in the station, because his first thought on alighting from the Pullman was to place the blame for his uncertain adventure. It was the need engendered by the secret and nothing else that compelled him to face the unknown, so that in the glad sunshine of this June day he was about to walk gropingly in the dark.

And because of the secret he must walk alone. There was no one on whom he might call for aid or guidance. Without anticipating concrete hostility, he feared vaguely. It forced him to an attitude of defense, which in turn roused his fighting blood.

He approached a uniformed porter and asked, a trifle sharply, "Can you tell me where the Tecumseh Motor Company's works are?"

"Sure!" cordially answered the man, and very explicitly told him. Tommy listened intently. But the busy porter, not content with his own

Digitized by Google

detailed directions, said at the end: "Come with me; I'll show you exactly!" and led Tommy to the street, pointed and counted the blocks, and gave him the turns, twice.

Tommy thanked him, left his valise in the parcel-room, and started to walk.

The baggage-man's friendliness did not give to Tommy a sense of co-operation. But as he walked the feeling of solitude within him became exhilarating. He was still alone in a strange country, and he had burned his ships. But the fight was on!

He dramatized the battle—Thomas Francis Leigh against the entire world!

When a man confronts that crisis in his life which consists of the utter realization that he cannot call upon anybody for help, one of two things happens: He thinks of life and surrenders; or he thinks of death and fights. To die fighting takes on the aspect of the most precious of all privileges. To earn it he begins by fighting.

He walked on until he saw the sign, "Tecumseh Motor Company," over the largest of a half-dozen brick buildings. He wondered if it would ever come to mean to him as a man what the college buildings had meant to him as a boy. He would love to love that weather-beaten sign. But just as he now saw that his life at college had

Digitized by Google

been a four years' fight against many things, so, too, there must be fighting here—much fighting during an unknowable number of years. He was filled with a pugnacious expectancy. The desire to strike, to strike hard and strike first, became so intolerable that in the absence of something or somebody to strike at he forced himself to consider the vital necessity of strategy. He had forgotten the secret. It was just as well. The secret had done its work.

He saw the sign "Office," walked toward it, and opened the door. There was a railing. Behind it were desks. At the desks were men and women. Nobody looked up; nobody paid any attention to him. People moved about, came in, went out, neither friends nor foes. A peopled solitude—the world!

He approached the nearest desk. A young man was checking up rows of figures on a stack of yellow sheets. Tommy waited a full minute. The young man, obviously aware of Tommy's presence, and even annoyed by it, did not look up.

Tommy could not wait. He said, aggressively, "I want Thompson!"

The clerk looked up. "Who d'ye want?"

"Thompson."

"What Thompson?"

Tommy wanted to fight, but he did not know

Digitized by Google

which weapons to use in this particular skirmish. He resorted to the oldest. He smiled and spoke, quizzically, "Whom does a man mean when he says Thompson in this office?"

"Do you mean Mr. Thompson?" asked the clerk, rebukingly.

"I may." Tommy again smiled tantalizingly. He won.

Having been made angry, the clerk became serious. He said, freezingly, "Mr. Thompson, the president?"

"Exactly!" interjected Tommy, kindly.

"Well," said the clerk, both rebukingly and self-defensively, "people usually ask for Mr. Thompson."

"He himself evidently doesn't. He told me to ask for Thompson."

The clerk rose. "Appointment?" he asked.

"Yep," said Tommy.

"What name?"

Tommy pulled out the telegram, folded it, and giving it to the reluctant clerk, said, paternally, "He'll know!"

The clerk went into an inner office. Presently he returned. "This way," he said.

Tommy followed. His mind was asking itself a thousand questions and not answering a single one.

Digitized by Google

He walked into a large room. It was characteristic of him that he took in the room with a quick glance, feeling it was wise to size up the ground before tackling the enemy, who, after all, might not prove to be an enemy. There were big windows on three sides. One looked into a shop, another into the street, and the third into the factory yard. A man sat at a square, flat desk. There were no papers on it, only a pen-tray with two fountain-pens and a dozen neatly sharpened lead-pencils. Also a row of push-buttons, at least ten of them, all numbered. The walls were bare save for a big calendar and an electric clock. The floor was of polished hardwood. The desk stood on a large and beautiful Oriental rug. There were but two chairs; on one of them Mr. Thompson sat. The other stood beside the desk. Through an open door Tommy, with a quick glance, looked into an adjoining room and saw a long, polished mahogany table with a dozen mahogany arm-chairs about it.

"Leigh?" asked the man at the desk. He was a young-looking man, stout, with smooth-shaven, plump pink cheeks, that by inducing a belief in potential dimples gave an impression of good nature. His eyes were brown, clear, steady and bright, with a suggestion of fearlessness rather than of aggressiveness. His head was well shaped

Digitized by Google

and the hair was clean-looking and neatly brushed. His forehead was smooth. Tommy felt that there was a quick-moving and utterly reliable intelligence within that cranium. It brought to him a sense of relief. In some unexplained way he was sure that he need not bother to pick and choose his own words in talking to Thompson. Whatever a man said, and even what he did not say, would be caught, not spectacularly or over-alertly, but unerringly, without effort, by this plump but efficient president. It stimulated Tommy's mind and made it work quickly, and also inclined him to frankness without exactly inducing an overwhelming desire to confide. Understanding rather than sympathy was what he felt he would get from the stranger.

"Yes, sir. Thompson?" replied Tommy.

"Yes."

Thompson looked at Tommy not at all quizzically, not at all interestedly, not at all curiously, but steadily, without any suggestion of the imminence of either a smile or a frown.

Tommy returned the look neither nervously nor boldly. He was certain that Thompson knew men in overalls and men in evening clothes, old men and young men, equally well, equally understandingly.

"What makes you think," asked Thompson,

Digitized by Google

"that you have the makings of a man in you?" It was plain that he was not only listening, but observing.

Tommy had expected that question, but not in those words. The directness of it decided him to reply slowly, as the reasons came to him:

"I know I have to be one. I have nobody to help me. I have no grudge against anybody. I have no grouch against the world. I am not looking for enemies, but I have no right to expect favors. I never had a condition at college, but I am no learned scholar. I made the Scrub, but never played on the Varsity. I held class offices, but never pulled wires for myself. I did foolish things, but I'd as soon tell them to you. I don't know any more than any chap of my age knows who never thought of being where I am to-day, and never studied for a profession. I have troubles—family troubles not of my own making—and they came to me suddenly; in fact, the day before yesterday. It was up to me to whine or to fight. I am here."

Thompson saw Tommy's face, Tommy's squared shoulders, and Tommy's clenched fists. "I see!" he said. "And what do you want to do?"

"Anything!" said Tommy, quickly. He saw Thompson's eyes. He corrected himself. "Something!"

Digitized by Google

"Experience?"

"I graduated last week," said Tommy, barely keeping his impatience out of his voice.

"Ever earn money?"

"Not for myself. I solicited 'ads' for the college paper."

"Do well?"

"Yes, I did well. I got 'ads' the paper never had before."

"Had others tried and failed?"

"No. It was this way: I thought that the only advertisers who rightly should be in the paper already were there. What we had to offer was limited. I decided that the paper was an institution worth supporting by others than the tradesmen who sold goods to the fellows. So I tackled the fathers of my friends, men who ought to take an interest in the college without thinking of dollars and cents. And I tackled bank presidents and railroad men and manufacturers, put it up to them to do good to the paper without expecting direct returns. I asked for 'ads' in their homes on the ground that it was not business, anyhow, which it wasn't. It may be bad form to try to make money for yourself out of your hosts, but I didn't think it was bad form to ask a man anywhere to subscribe to a worthy object. I didn't pose as a live wire. Anyhow, they came

Digitized by Google

across. I couldn't do that to-day. I wouldn't ask Mr. Willetts at his home or on his yacht to buy one of your cars, but I would in his office."

Tommy saw Thompson's look. It made him add:

"I wouldn't expect to be as successful in asking them to give me money for something as I was when I asked them to give me money for nothing. If I have talked like an ass—"

"You graduated last week," interjected Thompson. Tommy flushed; then he smiled. Thompson went on, unemotionally: "You don't talk like an ass. Do you want to make money for yourself?"

"Yes, I do," answered Tommy, quickly.

"And for us?"

"That goes without saying. I can't make it for myself unless I first make it for you."

"To make money for yourself, eh?"

"Yes."

"That's why you are here?"

"No. I am here because your advertisement appealed to me more than any of the others I answered. I thought— Well, mine was an unusual case. And yours was an unusual 'ad.' I was sure I had what you wanted. I hoped you might see it."

Digitized by Google

"Didn't you think my 'ad' would appeal to thousands of young college graduates?"

"I didn't think of that. The message was addressed to me as surely as if you had known me all my life."

"What made you so sure of that?"

"I think," said Tommy, thoughtfully, "it must have been my—the nature of my trouble. You see, I was called upon very suddenly to take an inventory of myself." He paused and bit his lips. There were things he must not hint at.

"Yes?"

"I found," said Tommy, honestly, and, therefore, without any bitterness whatever, "that I had nothing. I would have to become something. I didn't know what, and I don't know now. I was what older people call a young ass, and younger people call a nice fellow. Don't think I'm conceit—"

"Go ahead!" interrupted Thompson, with a slight frown.

Tommy felt that the frown came from Thompson's annoyance at the implied accusation that he might not understand. This gave Tommy courage, and that made him desire to tell his story to Thompson, withholding only the details he could not be expected to tell.

"Look here, sir," he said, earnestly, "whether

Digitized by Google

you take me on or not, I'll tell you. I have no mother. My father cannot help me. I—I shall have to send money to him."

"Who paid for your education?"

"He did, but he—can't now. I—I didn't expect it and—anyhow, there is nobody that I can ask for help, and I don't want to. I want to earn money. I may not be worth fifty cents a week to anybody at this moment, but you might make me worth something to you."

"How?"

"I don't know what you will ask me to do, and so I can't tell whether I can make good here. But I'll make good somewhere, as sure as shooting."

"How do you know?"

"I've got to. I don't expect to have a walk-over, but even in my failures I'll be learning, won't I? I haven't got any conceit that's got to be knocked out of me. I've a lot to learn and very little to unlearn, and—well, if you'll ask me questions I'll answer them."

"You will?"

"Yes, I will," said Tommy, flushing. He had to fight. He began to fight distrust. He added, "I'll answer them without thinking whether my answers will land the job or not."

"Why will you answer them that way?"

Digitized by Google

"What's the use of bluffing? It doesn't work in the long run—and, anyhow, I don't like it."

"You must learn to think quickly, so that you may always think before answering," said Thompson, decidedly.

Tommy felt that this man had sized him for a careless, impetuous little boy. Probably he had lost the job. If that was the case Thompson plainly wasn't the man for him. Tommy, without knowing it, spoke defiantly. He thought he was talking business to a business man. He said:

"Well, I am not selling what you want, but what I've got, and—"

"Where did you hear that?" interrupted Thompson. Then, after a keen look at Tommy's puzzled eyes, said: "Excuse me, Mr. Leigh. You were saying—?"

"I think you wish to know what I am, and so I want to answer your questions as truthfully and as quickly as I can."

"How much money have you got that you can call your own?" asked Thompson. He showed more curiosity now than at any other time in their interview.

Tommy looked at Thompson's chubby, good-natured face and the steady eyes. "I borrowed fifty dollars from friends to come out here with. But I had this." He put his hand in his inside

Digitized by Google

pocket where his mother's gift was. Then he brought out his hand—empty.

"Yes?" said Thompson. There was an insistence in his voice that perplexed Tommy, almost irritated him.

"It's—I think it is—a hundred dollars my mother—" Tommy paused.

"I thought you had no mother?" Thompson raised his eyebrows and looked puzzled rather than suspicious.

Tommy impulsively took from his pocket the little package of gold coins—the only money he could take from his father. He hesitated. Finally he said: "I haven't opened it. Would you like to know what it is?"

"Please!" said Thompson, gently.

Tommy decided to tell everything and go away, having learned a lesson—not to talk too much about himself. "My mother died when I was born. An uncle gave her a hundred dollars in gold. She saved it for me. She wrote on it, 'For Tommy's first scrape.' I haven't opened it. I don't want to. I'm in no scrape yet. But that's all I have that's mine, and—"

Thompson rose to his feet and held out his hand. His face was beaming with good will. Tommy took the hand mechanically and instantly felt the warm friendliness in Thompson's grasp.

Digitized by Google

"Leigh, I'll take you on. And more than that, I'm your friend. I don't know whether you'll make money or not, but I'll try you. I may have to shift you from one place to another. I tell you now that I'm going to give you every chance to find out where you fit best."

"Thank you, sir. I'll—"

"Don't promise. You don't have to," cut in Thompson. "Do you want to know why I'm taking you on?"

"Yes."

"Because you've sense enough to be yourself. It's the highest form of wisdom. Sell what you've got, not what the other man wants. Never lie. That way you never have to explain your blunders. Nobody can explain any blunders. You told me what you had. I'll help you to acquire what there is to acquire. Now tell me something—exactly how did you feel when you walked into the office?"

Tommy did not describe his own feelings, but what he saw. He answered: "Well, I walked in and saw people at work and nobody to ask me what I wanted. I suppose everybody who comes on business knows exactly what he wants. But I had to ask for Thompson, and nobody seemed to be there for the purpose of answering the particular question I was told to ask. And it struck me that somebody might come in who

Digitized by Google

might be a little timid about disturbing clerks who were busy at work, as I had to do."

"There should have been office-boys there."

"There weren't, so you haven't enough. It seemed to me every office of a big concern should have a sort of information bureau. Of course I'm new to business methods, but there are lots of people who have important questions to ask and are afraid, and they ought to be encouraged."

Mr. Thompson smiled.

"Well," said Tommy, defensively, "I've seen it with Freshmen at college. It may not pay, but it's mighty comfortable to strangers."

Tommy, when he had made an end of speaking, was conscious that he had talked like a kid. Mr. Thompson did not say anything in reply, but pressed one of the buttons on his desk. Then he said to Tommy:

"As a matter of fact, our main office, where most people usually go, is not here, but in the Tecumseh Building down-town. I'm going to give you a desk in the outer office here. You will be the information bureau. When people come in you will ascertain what they want and direct them accordingly. After you know where to find anybody and anything in the plant come and see me again. You start with fifteen dollars a week. Are you disappointed or pleased?"

Digitized by Google

"Pleased."

He knew that Thompson later on would put him where he fitted best. In the mean time he would be the best office-boy the company ever had.

A clerk entered. Thompson said to him: "Miller, take Mr. Leigh to Mr. Nevin. Tell him I want Mr. Leigh to know who is in charge of every department and who is working there and at what, so that Mr. Leigh can know where to direct anybody who asks for anything or anybody in the place. If Mr. Leigh thinks there ought to be more office-boys he can hire them. He'll be in charge of the information bureau. He'll need a desk. He'll tell you where he wants it." He turned to Tommy. "Ask for Thompson—when you've learned your geography. Good luck, Leigh!"

Tommy followed Miller out of the room.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

TOMMY, as he followed Mr. Nevin about, told himself that this was a new world and that wisdom lay in behaving accordingly; but, to his dismay, he found himself measuring his surroundings with the feet and inches of his old life. He was again a Freshman at college. At college the upper-classmen — old employees — natually loved the old place. But so did the Freshmen—in advance. He ought, therefore, to love the Tecumseh Motor College.

Strangely enough, not one of the men to whom he was introduced by Mr Nevin seemed concerned with what the new-comer might do for the greater glory of the shop. Boy-like, he attached more importance to the human than to the mechanical or commercial side of life. This was wisdom that with age he would, alas, unlearn!

Tommy's life had been checked suddenly; the emergency brakes jammed down with an abruptness that had jolted him clean out of his normal

Digitized by Google

point of view. What usually requires a dozen years and a hundred disillusionments had been accomplished for him with one tremendous tragedy. His father's deed not only fixed Tommy's life-destination, but made him feel that his entire past could not now be an open book to his most trusted friends. This gave him a sense of discomfort for which he could find no alleviation except in resolving not to lie gratuitously about anything else. But Tommy did not know that this was his reward for not sacrificing his manhood to the secret.

Mr. Thompson's orders were that he must familiarize himself with everybody in the shop and also their work. Because he realized this thoroughly he made up his mind, with a quickness that augured well for his future, that he must not tie up with the clerks in the office. The Tecumseh Company made and sold motor-cars. Therefore, the men with whom Tommy must associate, in the intimacy of boarding-house life, should be men from whom he could learn all about Tecumseh motors.

The one compensation of tragedy is that it strengthens the strong; and only the strong can help the world by first helping their own souls. The secret was working for Tommy instead of against him.

Digitized by Google

"I say, Mr. Nevin." There was in Tommy's attitude toward his guide not only the appeal of frankly acknowledged helplessness, but also a suggestion of confidence in the other man's ability and willingness to answer understandingly.

Nevin smiled encouragingly. "What's troubling you, young man?"

"I've got to find a boarding-house. I'm less particular about the grub than about the boarders." Mr. Nevin's face grew less friendly. Tommy went on, "I'd like to live where the chaps in the shop eat."

"They mostly live at home," said Nevin, friendly again. He liked young Leigh's attitude of respectful familiarity. To Tommy Mr. Nevin was a likable instructor at college.

"I don't know whether I make myself plain to you, Mr. Nevin, but I'd like to be among men who know all about motors—theory and practice, you know. There must be some who board somewhere. If I could get in the same house I'd be tickled to death, sir."

Nevin liked the "sir"-ing of young Leigh, which was not at all servile. "Let's take a look round and I'll see whom I can recommend."

Nevin led the way, Tommy followed—at a distance, tactfully, to give Mr. Nevin a chance to speak freely about T. F. Leigh. Nevin talked to

Digitized by Google

three or four men, but evidently their replies were not satisfactory. A young man in overalls, his face smutted, his hands greasy, walked by in a hurry. He was frowning.

"There's your man!" said Nevin to Tommy, planting himself squarely in the other's path. "Bill!"

"Hello, Mr. Nevin! What's the trouble now that your great experts can't locate?"

"No trouble this time. Pleasure! Bill, do you live or do you board?"

"I believe I board."

"Any room at the house for a friend of mine?"

"I don't know. Mrs. Clayton's rather particular."

"She must be," said Nevin. "Bill, shake hands with Mr. Leigh."

Tommy extended his hand. Bill looked at him, at the "swell clothes" and the New York look and the clean hands, and held up his own grease-smeared hands and shook his head.

Tommy was confronted by his first crisis in Dayton in the shape of a reluctant hand. Grease stood between him and friendship. By rights his own hand ought to be oily and black. He was not conscious of the motives for his own decision, but he stepped to a machine near by, grasped an oily shaft with his right hand, and

Digitized by Google

then held it, black and grease and all, before Bill. Mr. Nevin laughed. Bill frowned. Tommy was serious. Bill looked at Tommy. Then Bill shook hands.

"If you don't mind I'd like to walk home with you to-night. I'll see Mrs. Clayton and ask if she won't take me," said Tommy.

Bill was a little taller than Tommy and slender, with clean-cut features, dark hair, very clear blue eyes, and that air of decision that men have when they know what they know. He hesitated as he took in Tommy's clothes and manner. He looked Tommy full in the face. Then he said, positively:

"She'll take you."

Mr. Nevin looked relieved. "Come on, Leigh," he said to Tommy, who thereupon nodded to Bill, said, "So long!" and followed Mr. Nevin.

"I'm glad Bill took to you," he told Tommy. "He is one of our best mechanics, but he is as crotchety as a genius. He distrusts everybody on general principles."

"Socialist?" asked Tommy.

"Worse!" said Mr. Nevin.

"Anarchist?"

"Worse!"

"Lunatic?"

"Worse!"

Digitized by Google

"Philanthropist?"

"Worse!"

"I give up," said Tommy.

"Inventor!" said Mr. Nevin.

"Good!" Tommy spoke enthusiastically. This was life—to meet people about whom his only knowledge came from newspaper-reading.

"Leigh," said Nevin, stopping abruptly, "are you a politician?" The voice was intended to express jocularity, but Tommy thought he read in Mr. Nevin's eyes a doubt closely bordering upon a suspicion. Tommy felt his characteristic impulse to be as frankly autobiographical as he dared. He did not know that he could not help being what the offspring of two people to whom love meant everything must be. He wasn't aware of heredity when he kept his eyes on Mr. Nevin's and replied very earnestly:

"Mr. Nevin, I'm going to tell you something that must not go any further."

"I was only joking. I have no desire to pry into your private affairs," said Nevin, when he saw how serious Tommy had become.

"I'm not going to tell you the story of my life," Tommy explained, very earnestly; "but something else. I really want to."

"Shoot ahead," said Mr. Nevin.

Tommy's position in the shop was a mystery,

Digitized by Google

for Mr. Thompson's instructions contained no explanation.

"It's just this: I am alone in the world. I have no money and I have no friends. I've got to make money and I want to have friends here. I'm not a hand-shaker, but—" Tommy paused.

"Yes?" Mr. Nevin looked a trifle uncomfortable, as men do when they listen to another man telling the truth about himself.

"I know I'm going to be damned lonesome. Do you know what it means to have been called Tommy all your life by all the fellows you ever knew, and all of a sudden to be flung into a crowd of strangers to whom you cannot say, 'I'm one of you; please be friends'? I'm nobody but Leigh, a stranger among strangers. And what I want to be is Tom Leigh to people who will not be strangers. If I push myself they'll mistrust me. If I don't they'll think I am stuck on myself. Sooner or later I'll have to be Tom Leigh or get out. I'd rather be Tommy sooner because I don't want to get out. Do you understand?"

"Sure thing, Le—er—Tommy," said Nevin, heartily. "And I'll be glad to help all I can. Come to me any time you want any pointer about anything. Those are Mr. Thompson's orders; I'd have to do it whether I wanted to or not. But—this is straight!—I'll be glad to do it, my boy!"

Digitized by Google

Mr. Nevin was surprised at his own warmth. He was a sort of general-utility man and understudy of several subheads of departments, a position created expressly for him by Mr. Thompson, who had a habit of inventing positions to fit people on the curious theory that it was God who made men and men who made jobs. In admitting to himself that he liked young Leigh, Nevin classified the young man as another of "Thompson's Experiments."

At quitting-time Tommy hastened to find Bill, whose full name, he had ascertained, was William S. Byrnes. Bill was waiting for him.

"I'll have to stop at the station and get my valise," apologized Tommy. "I have a trunk also, but I'd better find out if Mrs. Clayton will take me."

"Get an expressman to take it up; she'll take you," said Bill. He always spoke with decision when he knew.

They stopped at the station, where Tommy did exactly as Bill — the upper-classman — said, and then they walked to the boarding-house.

Bill was carrying his dinner-pail and Tommy his dress-suit case. They walked in silence until Tommy shifted the valise.

"Heavy?" asked Bill, without volunteering to take his turn carrying it.

Digitized by Google

"No," said Tommy, "but I wish I was carrying a dinner-pail like yours."

"I'll swap," said Bill, stopping.

"Oh no; I mean I'd like to feel I belonged in the shop."

"With the clothes you've got on?" said Bill.

"I can't afford to get any other clothes just yet."

"You might save those for Sunday."

"No money," said Tommy, and they walked on.

He was aware that he was talking and acting like a little boy with a new toy. But, on the other hand, he was very glad to find that the world was not the monster he had feared. There was no need to be perennially on your guard against all your fellow-men. They seemed willing enough to take you for what you frankly acknowledged you were. And the consciousness was not only a great relief, but a great encouragement, by obviating the necessity of fighting with another man's weapons, as happens when a man is trying to be what he thinks you want him to be.

They arrived at the boarding-place, a neat little frame house, commonplace as print and as easy to read.

Bill took Tommy to the kitchen and introduced him to Mrs. Clayton. "I've brought you another boarder."

Digitized by Google

Mrs. Clayton looked at Tommy dubiously. "I don't know," she said. "The front room is—"

"The room next to mine will do," said Bill. "The one Perkins had."

"Well—" she began, vaguely, looking at Tommy's clothes.

"How much?" asked Tommy, anxiously. His tone seemed to reassure the landlady.

"Eight dollars a week," she answered. "But when the front room—"

"It's as much as I can afford to pay," said Tommy, quickly. It wouldn't leave much to send home out of the fifteen Thompson said he would pay.

Seventeen thousand dollars! And there was need of haste! The tragedy showed in the boy's face.

"Of course that includes the dinner," said Mrs. Clayton, hastily, "same as Mr. Byrnes."

"Deal's closed," said Bill. "Come on, Leigh."

"Thank you, Mrs. Clayton," said Tommy, glad to find a home. He impulsively held out his hand.

Mrs. Clayton shook it warmly. As if by an afterthought, she asked, "You are a stranger here?"

"Yes, ma'am; I only got in this morning."

"He is in the office," put in Bill, in the voice

Digitized by Google

of an agency giving financial rating. "Come on, Leigh."

Tommy followed Bill, who took him to the room lately occupied by Perkins. A small, dingy room it was. The bed was wooden. The three chairs were of different patterns. The wash-stand, pitcher, and basin belonged to a bygone era. The carpet was piebald as to color and plain bald as to nap. The table was of the kind that you know to be rickety without having to touch it. Altogether it was so depressing that it seemed eminently just. It epitomized the life of a working-man.

It induced the mood of loneliness Tommy had felt when he stepped off the train. But this time there was no exhilaration, no desire to dramatize the glorious fight of Thomas Francis Leigh against the world.

Tommy turned to his companion. "Look here," he said, a trifle hysterically, "I'm not going to call you Byrnes. Do you understand? You are Bill. My name is not Leigh, but Tommy; not Tom—Tommy! If there is going to be any—anything different I'll go somewhere else."

Tommy looked at Bill defiantly—and also hopefully.

"All right," said Bill, unconcernedly. "She gives pretty good grub. My room is next door."

Digitized by Google

And then Tommy felt that his old world had been wiped off the map. He was beginning his new life—with friends! A great chasm divided the two periods. And in that knowledge Tommy found a comfort that he could not have explained in words.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

TOMMY found it difficult during the first few days to adjust himself to his new work. He had fixed his mind upon doing Herculean labors, in the belief that the reward would thereby come the sooner. Moreover, in taking on a heavy burden he had imagined he would find it easier to expiate his own participation in his father's sin of love. Twice a week Tommy wrote to Mr. Leigh, and told him never his new feelings, but always his new problems. And the secret, after the manner of all secrets, proved a bond, something to be shared by both. Tommy did not realize it concretely, but it was his own sorrow that developed the filial sense in him.

His disappointment over the unimportance of his position he endeavored to soothe by the thought that he was but a raw recruit still in the training-camp. In a measure he had to create his own duties, and he was forced to seek ways of extending their scope, of making himself into an indispensable cog in Mr. Thompson's machine.

Digitized by Google

The fact that he did not succeed made him study the harder. It isn't in thinking yourself indispensable, but in trying to become so, that the wisdom lies.

His relations toward his fellow-employees crystallized very slowly, by reason of his own consciousness that the shop could so easily do without him. He neither helped them in their work nor was helped by them in his. But it was not very long before he was able to indulge in mild jocularities, which was a symptom of growing self-confidence. Friendliness must come before friendship.

As a matter of fact, he was learning by absorption, which is slow but sure. He obtained his knowledge of the company's business, as it were, in the abstract, lacking the grasp of the technical details indispensable to a full understanding. But he found it all the easier, later on, to acquire the details. In this Bill Byrnes was a great help to him, for all that Bill appeared to have the specialist's indifference toward what did not directly concern him. Young Mr. Brynes was all for carburetors. He would more or less impatiently explain other parts of the motor to Tommy, but on his own specialty he was positively eloquent, so that Tommy inevitably began to think of the carburetor as the very heart of the Tecumseh

Digitized by Google

motor. He knew Bill was working on a new one in a little workshop he had rigged up in Mrs. Clayton's woodshed, a holy of holies full of the fascination of the unknown. Tommy must keep his secret to himself, but he was sorry that Bill kept anything from him. The fact that, after all, there could not be a full and fair exchange between them alone kept Tommy from bitterly resenting Bill's incomplete confidence in him.

Mr. Thompson, to Tommy, was less a disappointment than an enigma; and, worse, an enigma that constantly changed its phases. Tommy really thought he had bared his soul to the young-looking president of the Tecumseh Motor Company, and a man never can deliberately lose the sense of reticence without wishing to replace it with a feeling of affection. Mr. Thompson seemed unaware that Tommy's very existence in Tommy's mind was a matter of Mr. Thompson's consent. He was neither cold nor warm in his nods as he passed by Tommy's desk on his way to the private office.

Suddenly Mr. Thompson developed a habit of using Tommy as errand-boy, asking him to do what the twelve-year-olds could have done. And as this was not done with either kindly smiles or impatient frowns, Tommy obeyed all commands with alacrity and a highly intelligent curiosity.

Digitized by Google

What did Mr. Thompson really expect to prove by them? In his efforts to find hidden meanings in Mr. Thompson's casual requests Tommy developed a habit of trying to see into the very heart of all things connected with the company's affairs. Of course he did not always succeed, and doubtless he wasted much mental energy, but the benefits of this education, unconsciously acquired, soon began to tell in Tommy's attitude toward everything and everybody. And since the change took place within him he naturally was the last man to know it.

One day Mr. Thompson rang for him. Tommy answered on the run.

"Leigh," said Mr. Thompson, rising from his chair, "sit down here." Then he pointed to a sheaf of papers on his desk. Tommy sat down. He looked at the sheets on the desk before him and saw rows of figures. But before he could learn what the figures represented Mr. Thompson took a lead-pencil from the tray, gave it to Tommy, and said, "The first number of all, Leigh?"

Tommy looked at the top sheet. "Yes," he said; "it's 8374—"

"No. The first of the cardinal numbers!"

"One?"

"Don't ask me."

"One!" said Tommy, and blushed.

Digitized by Google

"Of course." Mr. Thompson spoke impatiently. "The beginning, the first step. One! Did you ever study numbers?"

"I—" began Tommy, not fully understanding the question. Then, since he did not understand, he said, decidedly, "No, sir!"

"Do you know anything of the significance of the number seven?"

"In mathematics?"

"In everything!"

"No, sir."

"Ever hear of Pythagoras?"

"The Greek philosopher?"

"I see you don't. At all times, in all places, a mystical significance has attached to the number seven. Ask a man to name a number between one and ten, and nearly always he will answer, 'Seven!' Do you know why?"

"No, sir. But I am not sure he would answer—"

"Try it!" interrupted Mr. Thompson, almost rudely. "It is also a well-known fact that in all religions seven has been the favorite number. Greece had her Seven Sages. There were the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and Seven Wonders of the Old World. The Bible teems with sevens: the Seven-branched Candlestick, the Seven Seals, the Seven Stars, the Seven Lamps, and so forth.

Digitized by Google

Abraham sacrificed seven ewes; the span of life is seventy years, and the first artificial division of time was the week—seven days. And the Master multiplied seven loaves and fed the multitude, and there were left seven baskets. And He told us to forgive our enemy seven times, aye and until seventy times seven. And there are seven notes in music and seven colors in the spectrum. Also the superstition about the seventh son of a seventh son is found among all peoples."

"I see!" said Tommy, and wondered.

Mr. Thompson looked at Tommy searchingly. Tommy's mind was working away—and getting nowhere!

Mr. Thompson now spoke sharply: "Take your pencil and strike out in those sheets every odd number that comes after a one or a seven. Get that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't skip a single one. I've spent a lot of time explaining. Now rush. Ready?"

"Yes, sir," said Tommy.

"Go!" shouted Mr. Thompson, loudly, and looked at his stop-watch.

Tommy went at it. His mind, still occupied with the magical virtues of seven, and, therefore, with trying to discover what connection existed between his own advancement and life-work and

Digitized by Google

Mr. Thompson's amazing instructions, did not work quite as smoothly as he wished. He was filled with the fear of omitting numbers. He did not know that Mr. Thompson was watching him intently, a look of irrepressible sympathy in his steady brown eyes. And then Tommy suddenly realized that obedience was what was wanted. From that moment on his mind was exclusively on his work. At length he finished and looked up.

"How many?" asked Mr. Thompson.

Tommy counted. Mr. Thompson timed him.

"Two hundred and eighty-seven," said Tommy, presently.

"Thank you; that's all," said Mr. Thompson, impassively.

Tommy felt an overwhelming desire to ask the inevitable question, but he also felt in honor bound not to ask anything. This made him rise and leave the room without the slightest delay.

Mr. Thompson smiled—after Tommy passed out of the door.

Just a week later Mr. Thompson stopped abruptly beside Tommy, who sat at his desk, and said, without preamble:

"Look round this room!"

Tommy did so.

"Again—all round the room!" said Thompson.

Tommy obeyed unsmilingly.

Digitized by Google

"Once more, slowly. Look at everything and everybody!"

Tommy did so. This time he included both ceiling and floor, and in the end his glance rested on Mr. Thompson's face.

"Come with me," said Mr. Thompson.

Tommy followed the president into the private office.

"Sit down, Leigh, and tell me what you saw. Name every object, everything you remember—numbers and colors and sizes."

Tommy understood now what was expected of him and regretted that he had not made a stronger effort at memorizing. He decided to visualize the office and its contents. He closed his eyes and began at one corner of the office, methodically working his way clear round.

Mr. Thompson had a comptometer in his hand and registered as Tommy spoke.

"That's all I can remember."

"Ninety-six—less than a third. Color seems to be your weak point. Study colors hereafter, but don't neglect form and size or numbers. Now tell me how the people looked; how they impressed you. Frankly."

Tommy told him frankly how the clerks looked to him.

"Come back here this afternoon at two-thirty-

Digitized by Google

two sharp," said Thompson. And Tommy, after one look at the plump face and steady eyes, went away, disappointed but honestly endeavoring to convince himself that Mr. Thompson was not really and truly unfair.

At two-thirty-two sharp—Tommy had taken the precaution not only to go by the infallible electric clock over the cashier's desk, but had predetermined exactly how many seconds to allow for the twenty-eight-yard trip from his desk to Mr. Thompson's—Tommy reported to Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Thompson looked at the clock, then at Tommy. "Leigh," he said, with an impatient frown, "sell me a car!"

Tommy, of course, had thought of the selling department as he had of others. He had become acquainted with such agency inspectors as dropped in to talk to Mr. Thompson, but that branch of the business did not interest him as much as others. He knew what he ought to do, and tried to recall all the devices of salesmanship he had ever heard or read about. He was not very successful, for though his mind worked quickly, no mind can ever work efficiently on insufficient knowledge or without the purely verbal confidence that practice gives.

He looked at Mr. Thompson, the man who

Digitized by Google

was trying to find out what Tommy Leigh was best fitted for. That made him once more think of Tommy Leigh in terms of Tommy Leigh's needs. He must not bluff. He must not conceal anything except the secret. Mr. Thompson was a square man. He must be square with Mr. Thompson. Also Tommy Leigh must be to Mr. Thompson exactly what Tommy Leigh was to himself. Now what was Mr. Thompson to him? And, indeed, what was Mr. Thompson to Mr. Thompson? An expert, a man who knew not only motors, but men, who knew more about everything than any salesman could know. No salesman could talk to Mr. Thompson effectively.

Mr. Thompson was not an average man. He knew! And the average man was a sort of Tommy Leigh—that is, he did not know much.

And so, though Tommy did not know it, his secret, which by making all other concealment intolerable, compelled him to be honest, again compelled him to do the intelligent thing. It enabled him not only to see clearly, but to speak truthfully.

And when Mr. Thompson repeated impatiently: "Come! Come! Sell me a car!" Tommy Leigh looked him boldly in the eye and answered confidently:

"Can't!"

Digitized by Google

"Why not?"

"Because it is impossible."

"Why?"

"You are you. You give me a problem that can't be answered except by an answer to quite a different problem. You know cars. You have cars. You make cars. You really don't want me to sell you a car. You want me to talk to a groceryman who has never spent more than seventeen cents for recreation, or to a speed maniac with ten thousand dollars a year pocket money. It wouldn't be Thompson. Nobody could sell a car to Thompson. Thompson doesn't need to be made aware that he wants to buy a car."

He was speaking from the bottom of his soul, and because he had been honest to himself and to the man who had promised to befriend him, Tommy's courage grew. It made him now look unblinkingly at the president of the Tecumseh Motor Company. He saw neither displeasure nor approval in the brown eyes. So to make sure he had made himself understood Tommy added, positively:

"It isn't that I think your question is an unfair one, but that the problem isn't a problem, any more than if you ask, 'How old is a man who wears a black necktie on his way to his office?' when you really want to know if he limps."

Digitized by Google

"That's all," said Mr. Thompson, and turned his back on Tommy.

Tommy turned on his heel and walked out of the room, conscious that he was a failure. He realized now that he had not made himself indispensable. His information bureau could be shut up and no harm whatever suffered by the company. In the tests to which Mr. Thompson had subjected him he had not proven that there was first-class raw material in him. Perhaps the tests were not fair; probably they were. Why, indeed, should he expect favors? What business could be conducted on the basis of unintelligent kindliness?

And the crushing sense of failure made his secret rise before the poor boy. He had intended to make restitution, and here he was good for nothing! When discovery came where would he be? He gritted his teeth and clenched his fists as the awful vision fleeted before his eyes—the vision of what discovery would bring to him. He would take the blow! He would be good for something! If not in Dayton, elsewhere.

He had been a boy! He had been himself, as God made him. But now he would be different! He would make Tommy Leigh a young man who would secure his advancement by any and all means. To succeed he would bluff and lie and—

Digitized by Google

No! Nobody had it easy, not even people who wouldn't fight. And now he wanted to fight—fight with all his might! The harder the fight, the better! Fight the world, life, hell, Thompson, everything, and everybody, the more the better. He would die fighting, with his soul full of rage. The great reward was the end of all trouble!

When a man commits suicide in a really glorious way he grows calm. How can petty annoyances disturb a heroic corpse? Tommy grew calm. He would have to leave Dayton, but Dayton had taught him just one thing—that beyond all question there was some place in the world where Thomas Francis Leigh would prove his value! He felt even a sort of gratitude to the head of the Tecumseh Motor Company, to whom he was indebted for his education. He had learned more of life in the few weeks he had been there than in the twenty-one years and three months he had spent elsewhere. His gratitude brought in time that mood of genial melancholy which is the heritage of youth, when youth, in the midst of life, feels its own loneliness. And because youth also is generous, Tommy felt he must share it with somebody.

He decided to write, not to his father, but to Marion Willetts! He had written to her only once, a bright and amusing letter—of course to

Digitized by Google

be read between the lines. She had answered. And her own letter, too, was full of Tommy Leigh. She asked for details concerning the few hundred things that Tommy intentionally had merely hinted at in his first.

This second letter to her must be carefully written. It must both express and conceal, say and leave unsaid. Every word must mean exactly what he desired to convey, in precisely the way he wished her to get the message.

He closed his eyes and began to compose.

Words never before had meant quite so much to Tommy. It was a literary revelation, because Tommy was utterly unaware that he was writing his first letter to his own twenty-one years and eighteen weeks!

He had not quite finished his peroration when Mr. Thompson came out of his office. Tommy looked up and saw him, saw the man who had written the end of his Dayton chapter. He felt no resentment. Indeed, Mr. Thompson had been more than kind. The fifteen dollars a week was really a gift; Tommy acknowledged to himself that he hadn't given a just equivalent therefor to the Tecumseh Motor Company.

And Mr. Thompson also was the man who had made it possible for Tommy to compose that wonderful unwritten letter to Marion, which by

Digitized by Google

crystallizing his own attitude toward life, work, duty, and earthly happiness, had enabled Tommy Leigh to become acquainted with the brand-new Tommy Leigh.

Tommy stood up, for Mr. Thompson was walking straight toward him, and smiled expectantly, hoping to receive some order, that he might carry it out in full, now that he knew he had to leave, and, therefore, could obey with an eager willingness unvitiated by hopes of advancement.

"Tommy," said Mr. Thompson, in the voice of an old and intimate friend, "are you game for a quiet evening?"

"Yes, sir," said Tommy, not betraying his curiosity or his fear.

"Will you dine with me at my house—seven sharp. We'll have a very quiet time talking, just the two of us."

Mr. Thompson was smiling slightly. Tommy felt a wave of gratitude surging within him. This man, being a gentleman, wished to break the news gently.

In his appreciation Tommy in turn felt honor bound to spare Mr. Thompson every embarrassment.

"Of course I shall be delighted. But I want to say, Mr. Thompson, that you don't have to—er—" Tommy paused.

Digitized by Google

"To what?" asked Mr. Thompson, puzzled.

"To be so nice about telling me that I—I haven't made good with you. You've done more than anybody else in the world would have done, more than I had any reason to expect. And—"

"What are you driving at?" interrupted Mr. Thompson.

"You've made up your mind to let me go, haven't you?" asked Tommy, bluntly.

"Hell, no!" said Thompson.

Tommy looked at him, wide-eyed.

Thompson went on: "Seven. You know my house?"

Tommy nodded as Mr. Thompson passed on. It was all he was able to do. In point of fact he had to ask Martin, the cashier, where Mr. Thompson lived.

He didn't finish his letter to Marion. He was too busy dressing for his first dinner in Dayton and trying to keep from singing. Whatever happened eventually, this was a respite. He didn't even attach any importance to Mrs. Clayton's look of awe as she saw Tommy in his dinner clothes, nor to Billy's ironical, "Good-by, old carburetor!" as he left the boarding-house on his way to Mr. Thompson's.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

MR. THOMPSON went in for etchings, and Tommy had to stop, look, and listen. He was not bored, because his proud delight in Mr. Thompson's versatility kept him awake. There were so many evidences of a wide interest in the non-money-making things of life in this home that Tommy found himself free from the oppression of his burden. Mrs. Thompson was away on a visit to her people and the two men dined alone.

Over the coffee in the library the talk finally drifted to Mr. Thompson. From that to Mr. Thompson's "Experiments" at the factory was a short step. Tommy had learned that all of these "Experiments" were at work in the experimental shop and in the selling department, and that not all of them were young men. Then Mr. Thompson talked about his advertisement in the New York *Herald*.

"I received many answers. I should have thrown yours away if you had not given your age.

Digitized by Google

It was too sophisticated and smart-Alecky. It didn't mean anything—except the truth. Not knowing you, I was not sure it was true. I can't stand puzzles, so I sent for you."

"I'm glad you did. It saved my life," blurted Tommy.

"Don't exaggerate, Leigh," admonished Thompson, calmly.

"I didn't," said Tommy. "But I won't." He couldn't tell Mr. Thompson, first, what had compelled him to look in the *Herald;* nor, second, how he had taken it for granted that his own answer would bring him employment.

"Do you want to tell me about it?" asked Thompson, in a matter-of-fact voice that nevertheless in some curious way showed sympathy—in advance.

Tommy's eyes clouded with the pain of struggle. "I—can't, Mr. Thompson," he answered.

Thompson's eyes did not leave Tommy's. "They called you Tommy at college?"

"Yes, sir—everybody," answered Tommy.

"It is not always a recommendation. A diminutive nickname is apt to keep a man young. But there are degrees of youth, and superficial affection often has a babying effect. I'll call you Tommy hereafter." Mr. Thompson said this in a musing voice. It made Tommy laugh, until

Digitized by Google

Mr. Thompson said, seriously, "A secret is hard on concentration, isn't it?"

Tommy started. He couldn't help it. Mr. Thompson went on:

"It makes the result of the concentration test I applied to you the other day all the more remarkable. At your age, with your imagination and the habit of introspection that an untold secret begets, it was unfair to make the test even more difficult about the magical virtues of the number seven. Crossing out all odd numbers after one and seven is the common test. I have improved it, I think. I must have concentrated imagination, if I can get it. You did very well. Of course you are no wonder, Leigh—"

"Certainly not!" interrupted Tommy, indignantly, before he stopped to think that it was not an accusation.

Thompson smiled. "But you did well enough to justify me in keeping you—for a while longer, at all events."

"Yes, sir."

"Now you must continue to study our work. Discover what you want to do; then make sure it is what you really want. Then try to convince yourself that it isn't. When you know, tell me. Do you want more money?"

Digitized by Google

"Yes, I do, but I won't take it," answered Tommy, very quickly.

"Very well," said Mr. Thompson, regarding the incident as closed.

Tommy was perfectly sincere in his resolve not to accept unearned money. Nevertheless, he felt a little disappointed at Mr. Thompson's prompt acquiescence. Then Tommy realized more than ever that the joy of telling the truth is in the instant acceptance of the truth by your hearers. It is what makes it important for words to mean the same thing in all minds at all times. If "no" always meant "no" there would be much less trouble in this world.

Tommy resolved to find out which part of the business appealed to him the most, and then he would tell Mr. Thompson. Then there would be more money to send home every week. He had sent so little! But he had paid off the fifty dollars he borrowed to pay for his transportation to Dayton.

"Where do you live?" asked Mr. Thompson.

Tommy told him; told him all about Mrs. Clayton and all about Bill and Bill's carburetor mania. When Mr. Thompson spoke it was not to refer to anything that Tommy had said.

"Don't know much about the selling end of the business, do you?" he asked.

Digitized by Google

"No, sir."

"Would you like to learn? Think before you speak."

Tommy thought. At length he said, "Yes, I would, very much."

"Think you'd like it?"

Tommy's habit of being honest made him discover that he could not answer either yes or no truthfully. So he decided, as usual when in doubt, to tell the truth. Better to be considered an ass than a liar—easier and safer.

"I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking that in the shop I can learn only what a mechanic thinks of the product, and what the shipping departments think of moving it away. What the buyer thinks, I don't know. So I don't know whether I'd like to be a salesman."

"They get good money. You'd like that. Think again before you answer."

Tommy thought. To him money meant only one thing: Not what one hundred thousand dollars, for instance, might buy for him, but what seventeen thousand dollars—no more, no less—would do for his soul's peace. He answered Mr. Thompson slowly:

"I don't know which is the greater pleasure—doing work you really love for fair pay, or making more money out of work you neither like nor dis-

Digitized by Google

like. I—I don't know, Mr. Thompson," he finished, and looked at his chief dubiously.

Mr. Thompson stared into space. "That's so," he said at last, in a perfunctory way.

Tommy felt he had hit no bull's-eye, but he was neither sorry nor angry. He bethought himself of his bedroom, where he could do his thinking unstimulated and undepressed. He arose and said:

"I've had a very nice time, Mr. Thompson, and you don't know how grateful I am to you, sir."

"Yes, it's bedtime," said Mr. Thompson, absently. Then he came back to Tommy. "Tommy," he said, "if you ever feel like coming to me to tell me what an ignorant ass you think you are, do so. I'll agree with you; and perhaps, after I listen to your reasons I'll even raise your salary on the spot. If you get lonesome walk it off; don't come to me. But Mrs. Thompson will introduce you to a lot of nice young people—"

Tommy shook his head violently. "Thank you very much, Mr. Thompson. But I'd—" He floundered till a ray of light showed him the way out. He finished, "I'd be more than glad if Mrs. Thompson would let me call once in a while so I could confidentially tell her what I think of her husband."

Digitized by Google

Tommy smiled what he thought was a debonair smile. He wasn't going to know nice young people who some day might read in the newspapers— And, anyhow, he wasn't in Dayton to have a good time, but to sweat seventeen thousand dollars' worth.

"I see I can't do a damned thing for you, young man," said Thompson, evenly. He accompanied Tommy to the door. He held out his hand. "Remember, when you want to tell me that you are not only an ignoramus, but an ass, and, to boot, blind, come up and say it. Good night, Tommy!" And he shook Tommy's hand firmly.

"All I know," thought Tommy to himself on the way home, "is that he is the greatest thing that ever came down the pike."

He thought of the day when he could feel that he owed nothing and dreaded nothing.

He fell asleep thinking he ought to look into the selling end of the business.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

TOMMY found, after his dinner with Mr. Thompson, that the responsibility of learning the business by doing his own studying in his own way did not weigh so heavily upon him. There were times, of course, when the slowness of his own progress was not comfortable, but he learned the most valuable of all lessons—to wit, that you cannot turn raw material into finished product by one operation in one second.

He now divided his time between the general business office in the Tecumseh Building and the office at the works. In the morning he was with the selling force, listening to the dictated replies to all sorts of correspondence or to the explanations and pointers of men who looked after the merchandising of the company's product. But his own interest in the psychology of selling was not personal enough. He couldn't bring himself to feel that in selling for the Tecumseh Company he was pleasing Thomas Francis Leigh quite as much as the company. Of course it would please

Digitized by Google

him to succeed; but he acknowledged to himself that the pleasure would not be because of the selling, but because of the success. He could not project himself into his imaginary auditors, for the wonderful possession of another's ears with which to hear his own voice was not to him what it is to the born pleader.

He began to think that selling did not come natural to him, but he kept on listening to the salesmen, grasping their point of view and at times even sympathizing with it, but always feeling like a buyer himself—an outsider. This gave him the buyer's point of view—an invaluable gift, though he not only did not know it, but felt sorry he had it. To conceal part of the truth, to be only technically veracious, to have a customer say, "You did not tell me thus and so when you sold me that car!" was an apprehension he could not quite shake off. All he could conceal was one thing, and in his introspective moments at home he almost convinced himself that his secret, by making it difficult for him to become an enthusiastically unscrupulous salesman, was interfering materially with the success of Thomas Francis Leigh.

His afternoons he spent in his information bureau, or wandering about the shop asking the various heads of the mechanical departments what

Digitized by Google

they were doing to correct one or another of the parts of the motor that seemed to be regarded by customers as sources of trouble. When they told him the customers were to blame, and that no car is utterly fool-proof, he refused to abandon his buyer's point of view. He would argue, with the valor of ignorance, against the mechanical experts —and learned much without being aware of it.

At home evenings he did not talk, but kept from brooding on his own troubles by listening to Bill Byrnes. The young mechanic soon outgrew his feeling of pity for the New-Yorker's profound ignorance, and then developed a friendship that rose almost to enthusiasm—Tommy listened so gratefully to Bill's monologues.

On this evening Bill told Tommy that everything was wrong with the work. Tommy was dying to ask for details, that he might sympathize more intelligently, but Bill had not seen fit to enlighten him, and not for worlds would he ask point-blank. So Tommy contented himself with looking judicial and told Bill:

"This carburetor business is becoming an obsession with you. Give it a rest and then go back to it fresh. When you get a hobby and ride it to death—"

"Grandpop," interrupted Bill, unimpressed by Tommy's octogenarian wisdom, "the moment I

Digitized by Google

see a carburetor that suits me, no matter whose it is, I'll have no more interest in the problem than I have in the potatoes in the neighbors' cellars."

Tommy was not sure that Bill was deceiving himself. He, therefore, observed, cynically, "All signs fail with inventors that don't invent."

Bill became so serious that Tommy felt he had hurt Bill's feelings. Before he could explain his words away Bill said, slowly:

"Let me tell you something, Tommy. You don't know what I've gone through." He hesitated, then he went on reluctantly, as though the confession were forced out of him, "My father was a mouth-inventor!"

"What was he?" asked Tommy, puzzled.

"A mouth-inventor I call him. He always knew what ought to be done by machine. He had mighty good ideas, but he never got as far as building a working model or even making a rough drawing. My mother used to tell him to go ahead and invent, and he'd promise he would. But all he ever did was to talk about the machine that ought to be built, until somebody else did it and copped the dough. Then he would tell my mother, 'There, wasn't I right?'"

Bill's face clouded and he stopped talking—to remember.

Digitized by Google

"Didn't he ever finish anything?" Tommy meant to show a hopeful loyalty to his friend's father.

"Yes, he finished my mother," answered Bill, savagely. "He got so he would talk in the shop, and the men would stop their work to listen to him, for he certainly had the gift of gab. He cost the shop too much, and so my mother had to support him and us kids. She invented regular grub for all of us, and it wore her out."

Bill paused and stared absently at Tommy, who tried to look as sorry as he felt and feared he wasn't succeeding. Bill started slightly, like a man awakening from a doze, and went on quietly:

"Even as a kid I was crazy about machinery. I wanted to be a mechanic and she hated the idea of it, but when she saw I was bound to be one she simply would talk to me by the hour about the same thing—to do my inventing with my hands instead of with my jaw. She's dead and he's dead. I take after her on the matter of regular grub, but I haven't got my father's nose for discovering what's needed ahead of everybody else. I don't seem to be as interested in a brand-new machine as in a better machine."

"The company would pay for any improvement you might make," suggested Tommy.

Digitized by Google

"I'm not so sure," said Bill, who was inventor enough to be suspicious.

"Oh, shucks! Mr. Thompson is a square man," retorted Tommy.

"He's like all the rest. All business men are nothing but sure-thing gamblers, and they never make their gambling roll big enough. Take the case of the Tecumseh carburetor. It used to be a fine carburetor."

"Isn't it still?"

"In a way. You see, the oil companies can't supply the demand for high-grade gas, so what you get to-day is so much poorer than it was five years ago that the old carburetor couldn't work with it at all. Now the carburetor is one of the principal things the advertisements call attention to in the Tecumseh." Bill permitted himself a look of disgust.

"What's the answer?" asked Tommy.

"To be able to use bum gasoline. I've been working on this at odd times."

"Why not at all times?" asked Tommy, with a stern frown.

Bill could see by Tommy's face that Tommy would remain unconvinced by any answer he might make. So he resorted to sarcasm.

"You see, dear Mr. Leigh, when you work with the company's machine in the company's shop in

Digitized by Google

the company's time, the company has a claim on your invention. Oh, yes, I could tell you a thousand stories of fellows who—"

Bill's voice grew so bitter that Tommy broke in: "You make me tired, Bill. If you get to think that everybody's a crook, you'll find everybody not only willing, but delighted to do you. Do you know why? Because everybody that you take for a crook will take you for one, too."

"And if you talk like a kid, everybody will think you are a kid and take away the nice little toy so you won't hurt yourself by being independent."

"I bet if I went to Thompson—"

"Yes, he'd smile like a grandfather, and pat you on the head and tell you to stick to the office-boy brigade where you belong, and kindly allow his high-priced experts to earn their wages. By heck! if I had a little time and a little shop of my own—"

"Well, you have the shop—"

"And no machinery."

"What machinery do you need?"

"Well, I have to get a generator. I'm dickering for one, but I am shy fifty dollars. I tried the self-starter generator, but it doesn't do what I want. So there you are—mouth-inventor."

Tommy saw Bill's despairing look and asked, "Can't you borrow one from the shop?"

Digitized by Google

"No."

"Fifty dollars," mused Tommy, "isn't much. You're making your three and a half a day—"

"Yes, but I've got a sister who—well, she isn't right. My father's fault." He paused and corrected himself. "No, it wasn't. Just her luck. When she was a baby my father thought of something and he yelled to mother to tell her. And mother was frightened and dropped Charlotte. The fall did something to her. Anyhow, she's got what they call arrested development. She will never be able to amount to anything. So, of course, I— Well, it takes a big bite out of the pay envelope"; and he smiled defensively.

"Of course," agreed Tommy with conviction. Then he irrepressibly held out his right hand toward Byrnes and said, nonchalantly, "Say, Bill, I've got a hundred I'm not using."

"Keep it," said Bill, shortly.

"It's yours," Tommy contradicted, pleasantly.

"Then keep on keeping it for me," said Bill, and rose. He went toward his own room so quickly that Tommy did not have time to pursue the subject further. At the threshold Bill turned and said, "I'm much obliged, Tommy."

"Wait!" said Tommy, going toward him. But Bill slammed the door in his face and locked it.

It came to Tommy that Bill, too, had his cross

Digitized by Google

to bear, and it was not of his own making—the sister for whom he must work, about whom he never talked. Yet Bill had shared his secret with Tommy, and Tommy couldn't share his with anybody! The more he thought about it the more he liked Bill. And the more he liked Bill the more he desired to help Bill in his experiments with the carburetor. It was a man's duty to help a friend. Tommy told himself so and agreed with himself.

He did not know that while his sense of duty was undergoing no deterioration, the equally strong desire for recreation, for something to make him forget his own trouble without resorting to cowardly or ignoble devices, insisted upon making itself felt. Then the thrilling thought came to him that besides helping Bill he was helping an inventor to do something useful, something that might be the means of accelerating the accumulation of the seventeen thousand dollars he needed. That made the loan strictly business, he thought, with the curious instinct of youth to cover the outside of a beautiful impulse with sordid motives, deeming that a more mature wisdom.

He had been sending three dollars a week regularly to his father. He had put it delicately enough. "Please credit me with the inclosed

Digitized by Google

and write it down in the little black book. It's too one-sided as it is; too much *Dr.* and not enough *Cr.*" This was all that he had written to his father about his remittances. He had not asked what proportion of the debt was rightfully his. He would not stop to separate the clean dollars from the tainted, but give back the whole seventeen thousand. Nevertheless, he now wished to do something else with his mother's hundred, and the gold coins began to burn a hole in his pocket.

One night after supper he said to Bill, "I've been thinking about our experiments." He paused to let the news sink in.

"Oh, you have, have you?" retorted Bill, with the elaborate sarcasm of the elder brother.

"Yep. Now if gasoline is going to keep on becoming less and less inflammable, what's the matter with going the whole hog and tackling kerosene?"

"Oh, shucks!" said Bill, disgustedly. Then meditatively, "I don't know—"

"I do," said Tommy, decisively. "No scarcity of supply and cheaper."

"Yes, and more power units; go further and cost less. But it will be more difficult—"

"Sure thing. That's what you're here for. The first practical kerosene-auto will make a gold-mine look like a pile of wet sawdust."

Digitized by Google

"You're right," said Bill. "But I've never tried—"

"I'll help you," said Tommy, kindly. "Don't talk about it; think!" This was rank plagiarism from Thompson, and he wouldn't let Bill say another word on the subject. Being compelled to do his thinking in silence made Bill grow quite excited about it. Tommy saw the desire to experiment show itself unmistakably in Bill's face. It made Tommy happy. He was helping some one else. Therefore, he was not thinking of himself. Therefore the secret slept.

On the very next morning Tommy went to one of the engineers in the experimental laboratory and asked, "Say, where can I get some literature on kerosene-motors—"

The engineer, La Grange, who had early taken a liking to Tommy, threw up his hands, groaned, and cried, "Another!"

"Another what?" asked Tommy.

"Savior of the industry."

"Is everybody trying—"

"Everybody—and then add a couple of millions on top of that. It's worse than Mexico for revolutionists."

"I again ask," remarked Tommy, severely, in order not to show his disappointment, "where can I get some literature on the subject?"

Digitized by Google

"You never read the technical papers?"

"No."

"Do so."

"Got any files here?" persisted Tommy. It was evident that somebody had beaten him to the great idea.

"Yep, all of them, and several hundred tons of Patent Office Gazettes."

"Where be they?" asked Tommy, pleasantly.

"In the library."

"Thank you; you are very helpful."

"Don't mention it. Say, Tommy, if you invent a kerosene-carburetor, swallow it whole before you bring it up here, won't you, please?"

"I'll cram it down your giraffe throat," said Tommy, La Grange being stout and short-necked.

He spent an hour looking over the files, taking notes of the issues he thought Bill would find useful. His disappointment over finding that so many bright minds were at work on the same problem was tempered by his stronger realization of the value of a working kerosene-carburetor. His profit came in his own recognition of his own ignorance. Enthusiasm isn't enough in this world. There must be knowledge. And other people existed who had knowledge, experience, and brains.

He went to the down-town office for the first time keenly interested in the selling department.

Digitized by Google

The more he thought about it the more important selling became. And the reason was that he was now dramatizing his own sales of his own kerosene-car. He would apply only sound selling methods when the Byrnes-Leigh carburetor was put on the Tecumseh cars; therefore he began to study sound selling methods with a more sympathetic understanding.

Mr. Grosvenor, the selling genius of the Tecumseh organization, was greatly impressed by Tommy's intelligent questions. It made him say to Mr. Thompson: "Young Leigh has suddenly taken hold in a surprising manner, but he comes here mornings only. He'll spoil if he gets too technical. I'd like to have him with me."

"Why?" asked Mr. Thompson, curiously.

"Because he'll make a first-class—"

"No, no! I mean why has he taken hold suddenly?"

"He is no fool. He instinctively reduces all his problems to the basis of 'Show *me*'—not Missouri distrust, but the desire really to know and—"

"Ah yes, the ideal juryman," said Thompson, musingly.

"I don't see it," said Grosvenor.

"The lawyers don't, either, hence it is all law or all emotion with them. Well, you can't have Tommy yet awhile."

Digitized by Google

"Why not?" asked Grosvenor, curiously. He, too, learned from Thompson and his experiments with human beings.

"He hasn't reported to me yet."

"But he's crazy to begin," protested Grosvenor.

"No, he isn't. It is only that something has happened. Wait!" said Thompson. "Now about the Chicago agency—" And they ceased to discuss young Mr. Leigh.

That same afternoon Thompson rang for Tommy. "Tommy," he said, "I want you to take one of our cars and play with it."

"Meaning?" asked Tommy.

"Whatever you like. Company's car, company's time," returned Mr. Thompson, impassively.

Tommy nodded. He saw, or thought he saw, usefulness to the company. Then he thought of Tommy Leigh. This made him think of Bill. The car being company's property, the Byrnes-Leigh experiments with it also would be company's property.

"And Sundays?" he asked, and looked intently at Mr. Thompson.

Thompson stared back. Then he frowned slightly and kept on staring into Tommy's eyes. "H'm!" said Thompson, presently.

Tommy would have given much to know what

Digitized by Google

the chief was thinking about. It fascinated him to watch the face and to wonder what the machine within the well-shaped cranium was turning out in the way of conclusions and decisions. Then the fear came to Tommy that Mr. Thompson might think Tommy wanted to joy-ride on the Sabbath or break speed records or have fun—Tommy who wanted no pleasure whatever in life until the seventeen thousand was paid back! The boy's face clouded. He couldn't explain.

"H'm!" again muttered Thompson, absently. Then his eyes grew alert and he said: "Use one of my own cars instead. Company's time, my car. Sundays, your time, your car."

Tommy's heart skipped a beat. Had Mr. Thompson guessed? It was positively uncanny. Then Tommy asked, "Is it an old car?"

Thompson looked sharply at Tommy. Then he said: "It isn't; but it is—so far as you are concerned. I expect to have to repaint it."

Tommy hesitated.

"Do you want to tell me about it?" asked Thompson.

Tommy might have said there wasn't anything to tell. But he answered, "I do, but I think I'd better wait."

"Very well, Tommy," said Thompson, seriously. "Want your salary raised?"

Digitized by Google

"Not yet!" said Tommy. Impulsively in a burst of gratitude he held out his hand. Then he drew it back.

"Shake hands, anyhow," said Thompson; and Tommy did.

"Mr. Thompson, I'll tell you—"

"Not much you won't!" interrupted Mr. Thompson. "Run along, sonny!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

THAT night after supper Tommy, who felt that his joy over the new car was almost too great to be strictly moral, told Bill all about it and saw Bill's flashing eyes at the thought of a car to experiment with, a lack that he had often bemoaned. Tommy thought Bill was entitled to some pleasure on his own account and, wishing to share his luck, he said, earnestly:

"I can't stand it any longer, Bill; you've simply got to take the fifty dollars. I'll lend it to you or give it to you, or we'll go in cahoots or on any basis you want; but if you don't invent my kerosene-carburetor I'll bust."

"Yes, but how will I feel if nothing comes out of it?" said Bill, gloomily.

"What about my own feelings, you pin-head! I'll feel a thousand times worse than you, if that's any comfort to you. I've mapped out my selling campaign. Why, I've been selling a thousand kerosene-cars a day for two weeks!"

"Yes, but—"

Digitized by Google

"You can't be an inventor. All inventors are dead sure of getting there if you only give them time and money. And here I'm giving you capital and from four to five Sundays a month!"

"Don't be funny!"

"In the event of honorable defeat I'll sell their measly gasoline-cars instead of our kerosene wonders, so I'm all right. Will you take the money, Bill?"

"Yes!" shouted Bill, and frowned furiously. "By heck! I just will!"

"Right! Are you sure you can get the generator for the money?"

"Yes, I've got him down to fifty. We'll split even on the patent."

"And your work?" said Tommy, shaking his head.

"And yours?" shrieked Bill, excitedly. "Whose idea was it? I won't go on any other basis."

"You are a d—d fool," said Tommy, severely.

"So are you!" retorted Bill, so pugnaciously that Tommy laughed and said, soothingly:

"Let's not hoodoo the thing by counting the chickens before they are hatched. You wait here."

Tommy went into his room, unlocked his trunk, and found the little package of gold coins his

Digitized by Google

mother had wrapped up. He read the faint but still legible inscription: "For Tommy's first scrape."

In that shabby room in a strange city she came to him, the mother he had never known, who had paid for his life with her own, the mother who had loved him so much, whose love began before he was born.

"Poor mother!" he muttered. And he tried to see—in vain!—a mother's smile on her lips and the blessed light in her eyes. He could not see them, but he felt them, for he felt himself enveloped by her love as though she had thrown a warm cloak about his chilled soul. A great yearning came over him to love her.

He raised the little package to his lips instinctively and kissed the writing. And then, not instinctively, but deliberately, that his love might go from him to her, he kissed it again and again, until the sense of loss came and his eyes filled with tears for the mother he now not only loved, but did not wish to lose.

She had loved him without knowing him. She had planned for him—plans that had come to naught notwithstanding his father's efforts to carry them out.

"Poor father!" he said. He heard his own words. He understood now that his duty to his

Digitized by Google

mother was his duty to his father. He must plan for his father as his mother had planned for him. His father must come first in everything! It was his father, not Tommy Leigh, whom he must save from disgrace.

The money must go to New York. It was not much, but it would help. It was as much as he could save in thirty weeks.

He hesitated. He saw his duty to his father. Then with the package still unbroken in his hand he went back to Bill's room.

"Bill!" said Tommy. His throat was dry. It made his voice husky.

"What's the matter? Is it stolen?" asked Bill in alarm. Tommy's voice had told him something was wrong.

"No," said Tommy. "Only I—I was thinking—" He paused.

"Cold feet?" Bill smiled a heroic smile of resignation, the triumph of friendship. He was blaming luck and no one else.

Tommy saw the smile and divined the loyalty with a pang. Bill was a man!

It really was Bill's money; the promise had been passed. He had been guilty of a boyish impulse. This was his first scrape! He heard his mother say he must not be thoughtless again.

"No," said Tommy, firmly, "but— Let me

Digitized by Google

tell you, Bill. My uncle gave this money to my mother before I was born—one hundred dollars in gold. She saved it for me."

He showed Bill what she had written. Bill held the package near the light and read slowly:

"For Tommy's first scrape!" He looked at Tommy uncomfortably.

"She died when I was born," said Tommy, who wanted to tell Bill everything.

"You can't use it," said Bill, with decision.

"Certainly I can."

"Not much; I won't take it!"

"You'll have to," said Tommy.

Bill shook his head.

"I'm sure," said Tommy, seriously, "it's all right to use it for the work."

"If it was mine I wouldn't even open the package if it was to save me from jail," said Bill.

"Well, I will, to save myself from the insane-asylum," said Tommy. He hesitated, then he opened the package with fingers that trembled slightly. There were ten gold eagles. Tommy counted out five and wrapped up the other five. "Here, Bill," he said.

"No!" shouted Bill. His face was flushed. He put his hands in his pockets determinedly, so he couldn't take the money.

Digitized by Google

"There they are, on the table. Now lose them!" said Tommy, cuttingly.

He walked out of Bill's room, put the package with the remaining fifty dollars in his trunk and locked it. He wished he might save the original coins. It struck him he might borrow the fifty dollars from Mr. Thompson and give the gold coins as collateral. A fine notion! But to carry it out he would have to explain.

It was fully ten minutes before he went back to Bill's room. The coins were on the table. Tommy thought of a jest, of a scolding, of what he ought to say to Bill. In the end he said, very quietly:

"Please put it away, Bill. And I'd like you to come with me. We'll go out for a trolley ride."

"All right," said Bill. He hesitated, then as Tommy started to go out Bill put the money in his pocket-book and followed Tommy on tiptoe.

The two boys went out of the house in silence. They boarded an open car at the corner, sat together, rode to the end of the line, rode back, walked to the house and entered—all in silence. They went into Bill's room. They had been sitting there fully five minutes when Bill suddenly said:

"Say, Tommy?"

"What?"

Digitized by Google

"You know," said Bill, timidly, "a kerosene-engine won't start cold."

"I know it," said Tommy, who had read up on the subject just as he used to bone at college just before examinations.

"I've a notion—"

"Have you tried it?" asked Tommy, sternly business-like.

"Not yet, but I dope it out that—"

"Nothing on paper; no mouth inventing," interrupted Tommy, firmly. "Practical experiments."

"You're right," said Bill, with moody acquiescence. "I wish to heaven I didn't have to go to the shop. Some things can't be done by one man alone." He looked at Tommy and hesitated.

Tommy also hesitated. Then he said: "If you think I can help I'll be glad to, Bill. But you must do exactly as you wish. I don't want to pry—"

"You big chump!" interrupted Bill, "I've been afraid to ask you. You know I don't hit it right every time, and you may lose patience with me and—"

"Tut-tut, me child!" said Tommy.

"Well, I'm only warning you."

"Bill, I'd like to talk all night, but I guess we'd better go to bed."

Digitized by Google

"I sha'n't sleep a wink all night," Bill spoke accusingly.

"Same here," retorted Tommy. He was in bed trying not to think about Bill's carburetor and the new cars he would sell by the thousand, when his door opened.

Bill stuck his head into the room. "Tommy!" he whispered.

"Yes, what is it?"

"I—I am much obliged."

"Did you wake me up to tell me that?"

"Yes. And I have a sneaking notion—"

"My business hours, Mr. Byrnes, are five A.M. to ten P.M.," interrupted Tommy, because what he really wanted was to listen to Bill all night, and he knew he had to fight against the feeling that he was a kid tickled to death with a new toy.

"All right," said Bill, meekly; "but I wanted to tell you I was much obliged—"

"You have. Now go to sleep."

"I can't!"

"Then go to blazes."

"It's your fault!"

"Good night, Bill."

"Good night, Tommy. Say, a coil in the manifold intake—"

Tommy snored loudly. Bill's sigh was almost as audible. Then the door closed softly.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

TOMMY devoted himself whole-souledly to the study of the car Mr. Thompson had told him to play with. It delighted him to put flesh on what hitherto had been but the bones of theory. He was certain the car would make him very valuable to the Tecumseh Company as a salesman. As soon as he could drive with confidence he began to drive with pleasure, and as soon as he could do that he dragged Bill from the little shop in Mrs. Clayton's woodshed and gave him a joy-ride. Together they made a long list of improvements, nearly all of them suggested by Tommy, who, not being a mechanic, found difficult and complicated what to Bill was a simple matter to fix and adjust. "The Beginner's Delight" was what Tommy, the salesman, called the Tecumseh car as it ought to be, the car that would sell itself. Bill, the mechanic, called it "The D. F.'s Dream."

Tommy at first dutifully reported the needed improvements to the men in the shop, but they

Digitized by Google

laughed at him and called him Daredevil Dick; or, when they took him seriously, told him that the suggestions were either impractical or unavailable, because they involved structural changes that were either commercially extravagant or mechanically inexpedient.

"In a piece of machinery, as in everything else in life, Tommy," La Grange told him one day, because he saw the disappointment in Tommy's eyes, "we are up against a series of compromises. One must try to lose as little as possible in one place in order to gain more somewhere else. It is a matter of weighing profits and losses."

"You must be a bookkeeper under your vest," retorted Tommy, "you are so struck with the philosophical value of items. Life isn't a ledger. 'Profit-and-loss' was invented as a sort of waste-basket for the mistakes industrial corporations make through their mechanical experts."

"Keep on discovering defects, Tommy," laughed La Grange, "you'll make a fine salesman yet." Then he became serious. "As a matter of fact, some of the best suggestions have come from laymen."

"Don't look at me. My trouble is that I am ahead of my time," said Tommy, haughtily, and went off to tell Bill his grievances. After that they decided to jot down the suggestions, and if

Digitized by Google

possible try them out. But Tommy found that, as he understood the car better, fewer improvements suggested themselves. He began to think the trouble was with the buyers.

His resolve to repay the seventeen thousand dollars was by now divested of all heroics and, consequently, of self-pity. It had become a duty thoroughly assimilated. But the reason why the secret had lost its power to torture him beyond measure was that, beginning by hoping, he ended by being convinced that, if discovery came, Mr. Thompson and Bill and Grosvenor and La Grange and Nevin and the others would know that he was not to blame.

But when it occurred to him that his thoughts still were all of self, the reaction was so strong that he almost yearned for discovery. He even dramatized it. He saw the trial, heard the sentence, said good-by to his father at the door of the jail, and then went back to his work in Dayton, to toil for the bank, to pay the debt just the same, to save his wages, to make a new home and have it ready for his father. He would pay with love what his father had paid for love. And then Tommy told himself that it was not for him to see visions and dream dreams, but to hustle and pay; so that the spur was just as sharp, but not quite so cruelly applied.

Digitized by Google

One morning Tommy, in his car, left the shop on his way to the country. On Main Street near Fourth he saw Mr. Thompson on foot. Thompson held up his hand. Tommy drew up alongside.

"Give us a ride?" asked Thompson, pleasantly.

Tommy gravely touched his cap with rigid fingers, and asked, "Where to, sir?"

"With you," answered Thompson.

"Get in." And Tommy opened the rear door.

Thompson shook his head, got in front, and sat beside Tommy.

Tommy shifted gears more diffidently than usual. They clashed horridly. His face grew red.

"Excited?" asked Thompson, seriously.

"Yes," answered Tommy, frankly.

"Get over it!" Thompson's advice was given in such a calm voice that it did not help Tommy. Whereupon Thompson laughed and said, "Tommy, I completely wrecked my first seven cars."

A great wave of gratitude surged within Tommy. It gave him mastery of the machine. He drove on carefully and easily until he reached a good stretch of road near the city limits. He let her out. He did not remember when he had felt such perfect control. He slowed down when they came to a crossroad.

"Going to Columbus?" asked Mr. Thompson.

Digitized by Google

"If you wish," replied Tommy, nonchalantly.

"Not to-day. Let me off at the trolley line."

"I'll take you back," said Tommy.

"Does it interfere with your plans?"

Interfere with his plans? This man who was paying him wages asked that question! Did a finer man live anywhere?

"Not a bit. I was only trying out—" Tommy stopped short. He had been taking liberties with the carburetor by advice and with the consent of Bill. And it was Thompson's car!

"What?" asked Thompson.

Tommy told him.

"Lots of room for improvement in the Tecumseh, eh?" Mr. Thompson's voice was neither sarcastic nor admiring.

Tommy answered, "We think so."

"Who is we?"

"Me and Bill Byrnes," smiled Tommy.

"Lots of suggestions?"

"Some."

"Decreasing as you learn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Been in the testing-shop?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell 'em?"

"Yes, sir."

"All the suggestions?"

Digitized by Google

"No, sir."

"Only at first?"

"Right!"

"Why did you stop?"

"Well, we found out that some of the things we thought might be improved couldn't be, by reason of expense or weight or something else. So we decided to try to make sure our improvements would improve or could be carried out before we spoke."

"Want to go into the shop?"

"Not as a steady job. I'll never make a mechanic."

"Bill want to experiment in our testing department?"

"I don't think so."

"Why not?"

"He says it annoys him to have people round him when he wants to be alone."

"Must be an inventor."

"Well," apologized Tommy, "his father was."

Thompson laughed. "The wisest things we say, my boy, are the things we say not knowing how wise they are. And so La Grange and the others laughed when you casually asked about the one thing you and Bill are so interested in?"

Tommy almost lost his grip on the wheel. He slowed down so that they barely crawled, and

Digitized by Google

asked, "Please, Mr. Thompson, did La Grange tell you?"

"No; he's never spoken to me about you."

"Then how do you know?"

Tommy looked into Mr. Thompson's face intently. Thompson answered very quietly:

"Didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And didn't they?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's how I know."

Tommy could grasp only that it was obvious to Mr. Thompson. He gave up trying to understand how such a mind worked, and began:

"You see, Mr. Thompson, it's this way. We think—"

"Don't tell me, Tommy," interrupted Mr. Thompson, quickly. His face was serious. He continued, "You and Bill work at it at home?"

"Yes, sir. That is, he works and I look on."

"Quite right!" And Thompson relapsed into silence.

Could it be that Thompson spied on them?

Tommy almost blushed with self-anger at the suspicion. This man was a wonder, that was all. He didn't have to be a crook. If he wished to be, what defense could avail against him? Moreover, he couldn't be a crook, that was all.

Digitized by Google

Tommy drove him to the works. Mr. Thompson, without a word, got out. At the door of the office he turned, faced Tommy, and said:

"That's your car."

"I—I—don't understand—"

"Your car."

"Oh, Mr. Thompson, I can't—"

"Yes, you can, in my garage. Plenty of room."

"I didn't mean—exactly that," floundered Tommy; but Mr. Thompson said, thoughtfully:

"You'd better stay with Mr. Grosvenor for a while. Want your salary raised?"

"Not yet. But, Mr. Thompson, I am—"

"So am I!" And with that Mr. Thompson went into the office.

Tommy, determinedly endeavoring not to consider the car his private property, drove it to Mr. Thompson's garage and walked to the Tecumseh Building.

"I am to report to you again, Mr. Grosvenor," he said to the head of the sales department.

"What for?"

"Mr. Thompson's orders."

Grosvenor looked at Tommy and asked, "Anything else?"

"All he said was tnat I'd better stay with you for a while."

Digitized by Google

"I am glad to have you, my boy. What do you want to do?"

This question would have resembled a sentence from a fairy tale to Tommy if he had not been accustomed to Mr. Thompson's ways. He answered:

"Obey orders." He meant it exactly, and he looked it.

Grosvenor stared at him and then lost himself in thought. At length he turned to Tommy a face utterly expressionless, but there was a suggestion of play-acting about it that made him think of Mr. Thompson, to whom an inscrutable face came so natural.

Grosvenor said, "I want you to listen."

"Yes, sir"; and Tommy looked expectant.

"That's all. You will sit in this office all day and listen."

"Very well, sir." Tommy's eyes looked intelligently at Mr. Grosvenor, who thereupon pointed to a desk in a corner of the room.

Tommy sat down, looked at the empty pigeonholes, opened a drawer, saw some scratch-pads there, took out one and laid it on the desk. Then he looked to see if his lead-pencil was sharpened. It was.

Mr. Grosvenor, who was watching him, smiled.

"How do you like your new job, Tommy?"

Digitized by Google

"Very much."

"What do you expect to learn?"

"How to listen."

"And what will that teach you?"

"I hope, for one thing, that it will teach me to understand Thompson."

"Some job, that," said Mr. Grosvenor, seriously. Then, admiringly, "Isn't he a wonder?"

"He is more than that to me, Mr. Grosvenor," said Tommy, earnestly.

"And to me, too, my boy," confessed Mr. Grosvenor, in a lowered voice.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII

TOMMY used his ears to good advantage, and before long began to think that he was on the verge of understanding the general policy of the Tecumseh selling organization, and why Mr. Grosvenor did not try to sell a Tecumseh car to every man in the United States. The only thing that stood in the way of complete understanding was his own appalling ignorance of the A B C of business. One morning he told Mr. Grosvenor he thought it would be wise if he could learn step by step. For all answer Mr. Grosvenor told him:

"You are not here to learn details, but to absorb general principles. Some day Mr. Thompson may tell you what to specialize on. In the mean time just breathe, Tommy. Most people have a habit of telling themselves that a certain thing is very difficult. From that to saying it is impossible to understand is a short step, and that keeps them from trying to understand. Details can be so complex and intricate as to hide first principles."

Digitized by Google

Tommy nodded gratefully, but in his heart of hearts he yearned for details, because he remembered that he had not seen any pleasure in selling cars until he had begun to sell, in his mind, his own kerosene-car. But he persevered, because he realized that the ability to "see big" was the most valuable of all. If it could be acquired by hard work he would get it.

He had his more juvenile emotions pretty well under control by now, and would have told himself so had he been introspective enough to ask the question. And yet from time to time there came to him something like a suspicion that he was having too easy a time, too pleasing a task. Did anybody ever have such a job as his? The car gave him so much unearned pleasure that he sometimes feared he was not doing his duty in full. Whenever that thought, prompted by the lingering instinct of expiation, came to him, Tommy took out of his weekly pay all but what was strictly necessary to carry him over till next pay-day. And when he craved to smoke, which was very often, and he conquered the craving, he thought of the many blank pages on the Cr. side of the little black book at home in New York, and he was glad that he had wished to smoke and still gladder that he had not smoked. From some remote ancestor Tommy had his share,

Digitized by Google

fortunately not over-bulky, of the New England conscience.

Bill was having all sorts of troubles, trying and untrying. At times success seemed within reach, but an unscalable wall suddenly reared itself before his very nose. And then Bill's anger expressed itself both verbally and muscularly, a perfectly insane fury that made Tommy despair, for he thought an inventor should, above all things, have patience. But Bill's outbursts did not last over five minutes, after which he would return to the attack smiling and so full of amiability that it was a pleasure to watch him work and, later, to listen to him explaining.

To Tommy the most thrilling speeches in the world were Bill's, on the subject of what the automobile industry would become when the Byrnes carburetor was finished. Bill contented himself with seeing it on every automobile in the world; but Tommy saw the seventeen thousand dollars paid off. It would make him master of himself, czar of his destiny; so that the remoter future ceased to be a problem worth considering.

Tommy had so little to do with Mr. Thompson now that he did not even wonder if Mr. Grosvenor ever spoke to the chief about him. One morning the message came by telephone to Mr. Gros-

Digitized by Google

venor's office that Mr. Thompson wished to see Tommy at the works. Tommy instantly went.

"Tommy," said Mr. Thompson, abruptly, "do you now want to be a cog?"

Tommy was not sure he understood. He realized that he was to be put to work definitely as a small part of the Tecumseh machine, and wondered what Mr. Thompson thought him best fitted for. He himself was not quite sure what he'd like to be; indeed, the fear suddenly came to him that he took an interest in too many things. But whatever Thompson said, he would do.

"I'm willing to be, sir."

"Have you picked it out yourself?"

"You are the cog-picker, Mr. Thompson. You know more about it than I do."

"I make mistakes," said Thompson, frowning slightly.

"If you make one in my case," said Tommy, very seriously, "I'll tell you—the moment I myself am absolutely sure of it."

"Now answer my first question," said Thompson.

"I am sorry to say I have not found out what cog I want to be." It cost Tommy a sharp pang to acknowledge his failure. That is why he looked unflinchingly into Mr. Thompson's eyes as he spoke.

Digitized by Google

"Is that all you can say?" Thompson's voice was so incurious that it sounded cold.

"Well, Mr. Thompson," Tommy said, desperately, "the last cog always seems to be my cog."

"Why didn't you say so at once?"

"It didn't seem like an answer."

"It was more; it was a clue." Mr. Thompson looked at Tommy a full minute before he asked, "Are you still a college boy?"

"I—I'm afraid I am, sir."

"Keep on being it. Listen to me. You will spend next month in the shop."

"Yes, sir."

"Looking!"

"Yes, sir."

"At the machinists and the engineers and the electricians and the mechanics and the foundrymen and the laborers and the painters—at everybody. You will look at them. But what I want you to see is men."

"Human beings?"

Thompson nodded. Then he said: "Four weeks. Do you know Milton?"

Tommy tried to recall.

Thompson added: "John—poet."

"We read him—"

"You don't know him. I have found him of great value in automobile manufacturing."

Digitized by Google

Thompson said this so seriously that Tommy, instead of smiling, was filled with admiration for Thompson, who went on, gravely: "He even had in mind the particular job of Mr. Thomas Leigh—*Paradise Lost*, Eighth Book. For your special benefit he wrote:

> "'*To know*
> *That which before us lies in daily life*
> *Is the prime wisdom.*'

"Report to me in one month." And Mr. Thompson turned to his mail.

Tommy left the room full of admiration for Mr. Thompson and of misgivings about Mr. Thomas Leigh. He couldn't see very far ahead, so he went to his old desk in the information bureau, sat down and made up his mind to get back to first principles, as Mr. Grosvenor always preached.

Mr. Thompson had said that Tommy must continue to be a college boy; therefore, it was plain that for some reason, not quite so plain, Mr. Thompson wished to get reports from a college boy. Then that he must look at the workmen and see the human beings. By having no theories about Thompson's motives and by not trying to make himself into any kind of expert, he would be able to obey orders. The truth! Thompson

Digitized by Google

was paying for it; Thompson would get it from Thomas F. Leigh.

For days Tommy wandered about from place to place, unable to speak to most of his fellow-employees, who were too busy to indulge in heart-to-heart talks with the official college boy who was studying them. At lunch-time it was easier to mix with them as he wished, and he ate out of his lunch-pail as if he were one of them. But there seemed to be a barrier between them and himself, chiefly, he again decided, because his job did not classify—and, therefore, they could not take him into full membership. Moreover, his interest was in listening rather than in talking, and that was almost fatal to perfect frankness, for they didn't know why he was so interested in everything they did and said. They did not quite regard him as a spy, but he was not a blood brother. It was only when they began to tease him and to make clear his abysmal ignorance of their business, and to poke fun at him in all sorts of ways, that the ice was broken. He accepted it all so good-naturedly and was so sincerely anxious to be friends that in the end they took him in. Some of them even told him their troubles.

Bill kept on working away at his experiments at home after shop hours, with the usual violent changes in his moods. One evening after a par-

Digitized by Google

ticularly explosive outburst, which ended by his shaking a clenched fist at the carburetor, Bill shouted:

"I'll make you do it yet, dodgast ye!"

"Bill," said Tommy, seriously, "tell your partner what the trouble is. Begin at the beginning and use words of one syllable."

"What good will that do, you poor college dude?"

"Well, it will enable me to give you a d—d good licking with a free conscience," said Tommy. "Did you never hear how often inventors' wives have suggested the way out by means of the little door labeled Common Sense? It is in *The Romances of Great Inventors.*"

"Well, if you can find the way out of this you are a wonder."

"I am. Go on." Bill looked at Tommy, who went on, cheerfully, "Be a sport; loosen up."

After a moment Bill spoke calmly, "You know heat is not enough to effect the perfect vaporization of the kerosene."

"What would be the effect of passing a whopper of an electric current direct through the kerosene before you do anything else?"

Tommy, as he said this, looked as wise as a woman does when she offers advice because having no knowledge she can give no commands.

Digitized by Google

"I don't know," said Bill, indifferently. Then he repeated, "I don't know," less indifferently. Then he shouted: "I don't know, but, by heck, I'm going to find out! Now get out of here!"

"Will it explode?" asked Tommy.

"No. But I can't work with anybody round me."

"Why can't you? Honestly now."

"Well," said Bill, "I feel like a fool when I fail, and I have a rotten temper, and—and—" Bill hesitated; then his face flushed.

"Then what?" asked Tommy, curiously.

"Well, I'm fond of you and I don't want to have a fight when I'm out of my head. Now will you go or will you stay?"

"I'll go. If I ever landed on the point of the chin—" And shaking his head dolefully, Tommy shook hands with Bill and left.

There was always his automobile. He took Mrs. Clayton out for a joy-ride.

A few days later Bill said to Tommy at breakfast: "Your new high-tension generator is a wonder. I can get a very high-frequency current—"

"You can?" interrupted Tommy, with a frown. He did this merely to encourage Bill, who thereupon explained:

"Of course I'm using a step-up transformer with it, and something has happened!"

Digitized by Google

"Certainly"; and Tommy nodded wisely. He added: "I expected it to. But you can't use that kind of generator on cars, can you?"

"Oh, we'll have no trouble about the generator once I get what I'm after."

"Sure of that?"

"Oh yes," said Bill, gloomily.

"Then what's the trouble?" asked Tommy, alarmed by Bill's look.

"I certainly do get the vaporization all right, all right."

"Great Scott! isn't that what you wanted?"

"Yes."

"Then we've got it!"

"Yes, but I don't know what does it," said Bill in despair.

"No smoke?" persisted Tommy.

"Not a darned bit. The inside of the engine was clean as a whistle." Bill shook his head and frowned as at very unpleasant news.

"Well," observed Tommy, thoughtfully, "something has happened!"

"Indeed?" Bill looked very polite.

"You don't know what, and I don't, either. Therefore—" Tommy paused for effect.

Bill's elaborate sarcasm failed him. "Go on, you idiot!" he shouted.

"Therefore, I will find out!" announced Tommy.

Digitized by Google

"Ask La Grange and have him cop the whole cheese!"

"No, William. You admit we've got to know what happens, don't you?"

"Certainly. Otherwise, what will I get a patent on?"

Tommy realized in a flash that Bill might have stumbled upon something that would have far-reaching results on everybody concerned as well as on the industry. What was now needed was plain to him.

"William," he said, slowly, "I will go to an altruist."

"A what?"

"A college professor. We must prepare a lot of questions to ask and we will get his answers. And then we must check up the answers by actual experiment. See?"

"No, I don't. But I see very clearly that if you give away—"

"You make me tired," said Tommy, pleasantly. "It's the suspicious farmer who always buys the gold brick. What we need now is knowledge. We'll go to one of those despised beings who have nothing to live for but to know."

"But I tell you that if you go blabbing—"

"We won't blab; he will. He loves to. He will make us rich by his speech, and then he will thank

Digitized by Google

us for having so patiently listened to his lecture, and for doing him the honor of transmitting his thousands of hours of study into thousands of dollars of cash for ourselves. That is his reward, and we shall grant it to him unhesitatingly as befits captains of industry. Bill, about all I got out of college was to know where to go for information. Now don't talk. Look at the clock. Eat!"

At dinner-time they again talked about it. That night Bill ran his engine for Tommy's benefit. He took a power test and showed Tommy a number of pieces of paper which Bill said were "cards." They meant nothing to Tommy, but Bill asserted they were great; and this confirmed Tommy's judgment that the wise thing to do was to consult one of those experts whose delight it is to clear those mysteries that have nothing to do with the greatest mystery of all—money-making. On the next day he asked guarded questions of La Grange and others, and gathered from their answers that W. D. Jenkins, of the Case School at Cleveland, was the great authority on the subject. So Tommy wrote to Professor Jenkins asking for an interview, and while he waited for the answer asked Williams, one of the Tecumseh lawyers, all about patents and patent lawyers and the troubles of inventors, and, above all, the

Digitized by Google

mistakes of inventors. From him he learned about the vast amount of patent litigation that might have been averted if the inventors and their lawyers had only gone about their business intelligently. Tommy realized that he must get the best lawyer available. Williams spoke very highly of exactly three of his patent colleagues in the United States. The nearest was Mr. Hudson Greene Kemble, at Cleveland, where Professor Jenkins lived.

When he spoke to Bill about it Bill asked: "How do you know he is straight? If he is so smart, won't he see what a big thing—"

"You still talk like the wise rube before he acquires three and a half pounds of brass for two hundred and eighty dollars. A first-class professional man doesn't have to be a crook to make money. Suppose we've got to get what they call a basic patent? Don't you see it takes a first-class man to fence it in so that we can keep all that is coming to us, not only to-day but years from now when it comes to be used in ways and places we don't even suspect at this moment? And inventors don't always know the real reason why their invention works."

Tommy was really quoting from Williams, the company's lawyer, but he looked so wisely business-like that Bill grudgingly admitted:

Digitized by Google

"I guess you're right. But where is the money coming from? That's where most inventors give up the lion's share—at the beginning."

"I don't know," said Tommy, thoughtfully; "but I do know I'm going to get it without money."

"If you can do that—"

"What else can we do, you bonehead? We have no money and we must have some light."

When Professor Jenkins's answer came Tommy and Bill, with their list of questions all ready and the carburetor carefully packed, asked for a day off and traveled by night to Cleveland. In Professor Jenkins's office Tommy introduced himself and Bill with an ease and fluency that Bill envied. Professor Jenkins appeared intelligently interested. It was to Bill that he turned and asked:

"What is it you have, young man?"

"I—we have a kerosene-carburetor that works like a charm," answered Bill.

"Is that so?"

The professor did not speak skeptically, but Bill said, defiantly: "It gives perfect combustion, and we can start the engine cold even better than with gasoline. Peach!"

"Lots of people are working on that."

"Yes, sir; but you never saw one that did what ours does."

Digitized by Google

"What's the difference between yours and the others?"

Bill hesitated.

"Tell him," said Tommy, frowning.

"I don't know anything about the others except that they don't work."

"Show it to him," commanded Tommy.

Bill aimed a look at his partner, making clear who would be to blame if somebody else got a patent on the selfsame carburetor, and then slowly unwrapped the package. With his child before him Bill became loquacious, and he began to explain it to the professor, who listened and asked question, most of which Bill answered. Occasionally he said, "I don't know," and then Tommy would interject, "But it works, Professor Jenkins."

Bill could not tell how high a voltage he was using nor the kind of transformer.

"The man I bought it from said it was a six-to-one transformer. There is no marking on it."

The professor smiled, asked more questions, and finally Bill confessed that it didn't work above nine hundred revolutions.

"When we speed her up she begins to smoke like—"

"She does smoke pretty badly," interjected Tommy.

Digitized by Google

"Why?" asked Jenkins.

"Damfino!" said Bill, crossly. It had been a source of exasperation to him.

"That is what we are here to find out, sir," put in Tommy, deferentially.

"I've tried every blamed thing I could think of," said Bill. "If I only knew why she works below nine hundred I might make it work when I speed her up."

"H'm!" The professor was thinking over what Bill had told him. Then he said: "Well, you evidently are using a very high current. I suspect there must be some ionization there." He paused. Then, more positively: "I think you undoubtedly are ionizing the vapor. That would account for what results you say you are getting."

"What is it that happens?" asked Bill, eagerly.

Professor Jenkins delivered a short lecture on the ionization of gases, a subject so dear to his heart that when he saw how absorbingly they listened he took quite a personal liking to them. He suggested a long series of tests and experiments, which Tommy jotted down in his own private system of Freshman shorthand. At one of them Bill shook his head so despairingly that Professor Jenkins told him, kindly:

"If you care to have us make any of the tests for which you may lack the proper appliances,

Digitized by Google

we shall be glad to undertake them for you here."

"We can't tell you how grateful we are," said Tommy, perceiving that the end of the talk had come. "And please believe me when I tell you that although we are not millionaires now, we hope you will let us consult you professionally from time to time, and I promise you, sir, that I—we—I—"

"Mr. Leigh, I shall be glad to help you. And"—Jenkins paused and laughed—"my fee can wait. Let me hear from you how you make out with the heavier oils. Mr. Byrnes's device is very ingenious. I think you are in a very interesting field."

"Do you happen to know Mr. Hudson G. Kemble, the patent lawyer?"

"Very well. Is he interested in your work?"

"Not yet," said Tommy; "but we expect him to be our legal adviser."

"Couldn't go to a better man. By the way, he is an alumnus of your college, class of '91, I think."

"Then he must be what you say he is," smiled Tommy, happily, while Bill looked on more amazed than suspicious at the friendliness of the conversation.

Outside Bill and Tommy talked about it, until

Digitized by Google

Bill said, "That's what happens, all right, all right —ionization!"

"Sure thing!" agreed Tommy. "But we must make some more tests—"

"Naw! I want to cinch this thing. Let's hike to the lawyer. Come on; we haven't got time to waste."

They looked up Mr. Kemble's address in the telephone-book. Luck was with them. Mr. Kemble was not very busy and could see them at once. They were ushered into his private office.

"Mr. Kemble," said Tommy, so pleasantly that for a moment Bill thought they were old friends, "your name was suggested to us by Mr. Homer Williams, of Dayton. Professor Jenkins, of the Case School, also told us we could not go to a better man. I have no letters of introduction, but can you listen to us two minutes?"

Kemble looked into Tommy's eyes steadily, appraisingly. Then he looked at Bill, his glance resting on the package Bill carried under his arm—the precious carburetor.

"I'll listen," said Kemble, not over-encouragingly.

Tommy looked at him full in the face—and liked it. Kemble reminded him of Thompson. The lawyer also was plump and round-faced and

Digitized by Google

steady-eyed. He impressed Tommy as being less interested in all phases of human nature than Thompson, slightly colder, more methodical, less imaginative, more concerned with exact figures. The mental machinery was undoubtedly efficient, but worked at a leisurely rate and very safely—a well-lubricated engine.

"First, we have no money—now."

Tommy looked at Mr. Kemble. Mr. Kemble nodded.

"Second, we think we have a big thing."

Tommy again looked at Mr. Kemble. This time Mr. Kemble looked at Tommy and did not nod. Bill frowned, but Tommy went on, pleasantly:

"Everybody that comes here doubtless thinks the same thing."

"Every inventor," corrected Mr. Kemble.

"But we have just left Professor Jenkins, of the Case School of Applied Science."

"What did he say?" asked Mr. Kemble.

"He was very much interested. He has a theory, which we must prove by a long series of experiments he wants us to make." Tommy paused.

"Go on!" said Kemble, frowning slightly, as if he did not relish a story in instalments. Bill bit his lip, but Tommy smiled pleasantly and went on:

Digitized by Google

"Mr. Kemble, we have no money, but kindly consider this: We went to Professor Jenkins for science. We have come to you for legal advice. Therefore, we have not done what ordinary fool inventors would do. Whatever your fee may be we'll pay—in time. You will have to risk it. But now is the time for you to say whether you want to hear any more or not."

"And if I don't?"

"Then we'll go back and save up money until we can return to this same office with the cash. That means that some one else may beat us to the Patent Office. We think we have a big thing—so big that it needs the best patent lawyer we can get. Do you still want to take our case?"

Kemble looked at Tommy's eager face a moment. Then he smiled and said: "I'll listen, and then I'll tell you what I'll do. I may or I may not take your case, for you may or you may not have a patent."

"This"—and Tommy pointed to Bill—"is the inventor, William S. Byrnes. I am merely a friend—"

"And partner!" interjected Bill. "Share and share alike!"

"That's for later consideration," said Tommy.

"No, it's for now—fifty-fifty," said Bill, pugnaciously.

Digitized by Google

"I shouldn't quarrel about the division of the spoils if I were you," suggested Mr. Kemble. "Fool inventors always do. Suppose we first find out whether it's worth quarreling about?"

"Go on, Bill; you tell him," said Tommy, and he began to study the notes he had taken about the points Professor Jenkins had emphasized.

"Well," said Bill, confidently, "we've got a kerosene-carburetor that works all right."

"All the time? Under all conditions?" asked Kemble, leaning back in his chair with a suggestion of resignation.

Bill did not like to admit at the very outset that his own child misbehaved above nine hundred revolutions.

"Well, you see, I'll tell you what we've got."

And Bill proceeded to do so. From time to time Tommy interrupted to read aloud from his notes. Then Mr. Kemble began, and Bill was more impressed by the lawyer's questions than he had been by the scientist's, for they were the questions Bill felt he himself would have asked a brother inventor. In the end he admitted almost cheerfully that it didn't do so well when the engine ran above nine hundred revolutions. He was sure the high currency ionized the gas, but he somehow had not got it to ionizing fast enough.

Digitized by Google

"Lots of engines," he finished, defensively, "don't run any faster than that."

"How much have you actually used this thing?" asked Kemble, coming back to Bill's own.

"On the bench. But we've tried it out pretty well," answered Bill. He produced his cards.

Kemble studied them.

"And it starts cold!" said Bill.

"Is that so?" Kemble looked up quickly at Bill, for the first time appearing to be really interested.

"Yep!" he said, triumphantly.

Since they thought this a very important point, Tommy asked the lawyer, "Could we get a patent on that?"

"Yes, if it's new," answered Kemble.

"Sure it's new. There isn't any other in the market," said Bill.

"That's a fact," chimed in Tommy.

"I'll have to look into that," said the patent lawyer, calmly.

"If there was any patent, people would be using it, wouldn't they?" challenged Bill, unaware that all inventors make the same point at their first interview with their patent lawyers.

"That may be true," was all that Kemble would admit.

"What do you need besides this," asked Bill,

Digitized by Google

pointing to his carburetor, "to file an application for a patent?"

"Well, you'd better leave that here and find out what your dynamo and transformer are. In fact, I think you'd better send them on to me. That would be the easiest way. When did you first run this?"

After some guessing, Bill told him.

"You ought to keep a careful date record."

"What's that for?"

"As a record of your priority in case somebody else has the same thing."

"We've got the priority all right," Bill assured him. All inventors always are sure of it.

Tommy, who had begun to fidget uneasily, now asked Kemble, "About how much is this going to cost us?"

Kemble shook his head and smiled. "I can't tell you now. It depends upon the experiments you make and the results you get."

"Can't we file an application now to protect ourselves?" persisted Tommy, who knew how uneasy Bill felt about it.

"Yes, I could do that. But I'd like to see Jenkins first. You'd better plan to spend about two hundred and fifty dollars—" Kemble stopped talking when he saw the consternation on both boys' faces. He had been rather favorably im-

Digitized by Google

pressed with them. He added, "Well, you send me the generator and the transformer, and when I know more about it I'll let you know more definitely."

"If I am going to make the experiments, how can I send them to you?"

"I'll return them to you, and you can make your experiments after that."

"Mr. Kemble," asked Tommy, "when shall we be safe in talking to an outsider about this?"

"You'd better wait until the application is filed," answered the lawyer.

"Thank Heaven we came to you," said Tommy, fervently. "We are fellow-alumni. Professor Jenkins told me you were '91. I am '14. I've met Mr. Stuyvesant Willetts. He was '91, I think?"

"Yes, I remember him," said Mr. Kemble, with a new interest.

Tommy was on the verge of saying that Stuyvesant Willetts's nephew Rivington was his chum; but all he said was:

"His nephew was in my class. I am with the Tecumseh Motor Company in Dayton. And so is Byrnes here. Do you know Mr. Thompson?" asked Tommy.

"Yes," said Mr. Kemble.

"Then," said Tommy, determinedly, "I am

Digitized by Google

about to pay you the biggest compliment you'll ever get from a human being. Mr. Kemble, you remind me of Mr. Thompson!"

"Yes," said Kemble, "we are so different."

"Not so different as you think," contradicted Tommy. "Do you take our case?"

"Yes."

"You see, I was right," laughed Tommy, and held out his hand. After a barely perceptible hesitation Mr. Kemble took it. "Thank you, sir. Come on, Bill, Mr. Kemble has all we've got."

They returned to Dayton excited rather than elated. Bill contended there was no need of additional proof, and that there was no sense in making the experiments that Professor Jenkins had suggested. Six months with an equipment they did not have put it out of the question. Tommy, not knowing exactly what to say, told Bill that the experiments would fix exactly what happened and how and why, and that they must be made. But Bill in his mind was equipping a car with his kerosene-carburetor, planning certain modifications in the position of the tank, and trying to install a generator that would do for the self-starter as well as for the ionization of the kerosene. He thought he saw how he could do all these things; therefore his amiability returned.

Digitized by Google

And Tommy began to think that the seventeen thousand dollars might be paid off much sooner than he had expected. But in the next breath he decided that a wise man has no right to look for miracles. Therefore, he would not build castles in the air. Certainly not! But he couldn't help thinking of his father's joy—not his own, but his father's—when the seventeen thousand dollars should be paid back.

No wisdom in counting your chickens prematurely. Certainly not! But what a day of days that would be! In the mean time he must not allow himself to feel too sure. Poor old dad!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII

ON the day his month was up Tommy reported to Mr. Thompson. The president of the Tecumseh Motor Company was reading a legal document. He put it down on the desk and looked at Tommy.

"The month is up to-day, Mr. Thompson," said Tommy.

Mr. Thompson nodded. Then he asked, neither quizzically nor over-seriously, "Do the men in the shop like you?"

Tommy decided to tell the truth, unexplained and unexcused. "Yes, sir."

Thompson said, slowly: "The reason I wanted such a man as I advertised for in the New York *Herald* was so that I might ask him the question I am now going to ask you."

"Yes, sir," said Tommy, and concentrated on listening.

"What difference do you find between my Tecumseh works and your college?"

Tommy heard the question very plainly; he

Digitized by Google

even saw it in large print before his eyes. He repeated it to himself twice. This was not what he had expected to report upon. He needed to do some new thinking before he could answer.

This delayed the words of the answer so that Tommy presently began to worry. He knew that Mr. Thompson's mind worked with marvelous quickness. He looked at the owner of that mind. It gave him courage. He said, honestly:

"Mr. Thompson, I wasn't expecting that question, and I have to think."

"Think away," said Thompson, so cheerfully that Tommy blurted out:

"May I do my thinking aloud?"

"Do, Tommy. And don't be afraid to repeat or to walk back. I'll follow you, and the crystallization also. Think about the differences."

Tommy felt completely at his ease. "Well," he began, and paused in order to visualize the shop and the men and their daily duties, "you tell your men what they must do to keep their jobs. Their product must always be the same, day after day. At college they tell a man what he must do in order that he himself may become the product of his own work. A man here is a cog in a machine. At college he is both a cog and a complete machine." Tommy looked doubtfully at Mr. Thompson, who said:

Digitized by Google

"You are right—and very wrong. In the men themselves, Tommy, what is the difference?"

"I should say," Tommy spoke cautiously, as if he were feeling his way, "that it was principally one of motives and, therefore, of—of rewards!"

"Yes, yes, so you implied. Don't bother to write a thesis. Give me your impressions both of the human units and of the aggregation."

Tommy remembered the impressions of his first day at the plant. The feeling had grown fainter as he had become better acquainted with his fellow-workmen and they with him.

"It's in the way the men feel. Of course," he hastily explained, "that's a childish way to put it. At college a man belongs to the college twenty-four hours a day. If he makes one of the teams or the crew, it's fine. But if he doesn't, so long as the college wins he is tickled to death. I suppose at college a fellow has no family cares and—well, it is complicated, isn't it?" And Tommy smiled helplessly at Mr. Thompson.

"Tell me some more, Tommy," said Mr. Thompson.

Tommy, still thinking of differences, went on, bravely indifferent to whether or not he was talking wisely.

"I rather think here a man's duty is fixed too—too—well, too mathematically. The exact re-

Digitized by Google

ward of efficiency is fixed for him in advance. It keeps the company and the men apart. The college is equally the undergraduates and the faculty and the alumni and— It's hard to make myself understood. I hadn't thought about this particular—"

"Never mind all that, Tommy. What else can you think of now?"

"I think the men don't belong entirely to the shop because the shop doesn't belong entirely to them."

"Do you want them to be the owners?"

"No, not the owners of the property, but to feel—"

"Hold on. How can they be owners and not owners?"

"Well, if you could find some way by which the owner also could be a laborer and the laborer also an owner, I think you'd come close to solving the problem."

"Yes, I would. But how?" Mr. Thompson smiled.

"I don't know. I haven't the brains. But if I were boss I'd study it out. It is pretty hard where so many men are employed. All I know now is that the men, notwithstanding all the schemes to make them anxious to be first-class workmen, are working for money."

Digitized by Google

"They can't all be artists or creative geniuses, with their double rewards," interrupted Thompson.

"No; but here you pay them for the fixed thing. You don't pay them for the unfixed thing, as the college does. That's why we love it."

"What is this unfixed thing and how can we pay for it?"

"Well, a man gives labor for money; he doesn't give service for anything but love."

"Don't any of our men love their work?"

"Yes, lots of them. But they don't love the shop as we love the college."

Thompson nodded thoughtfully. Then he asked, abruptly, "If you owned this plant and were successful financially, what would you do?"

Tommy looked straight into his chief's eyes and answered, decisively, "I'd hire Thompson to run it for me, and I'd never interfere with him."

Thompson's face did not change. "What," he asked, "would you expect Thompson to do?"

"To find out some way by which each man would do as much as he could without thinking of exactly how much he must do to earn so many dollars."

Thompson laughed. "Some job that, Tommy!"

"That's why I'd hire you."

"And the dividends for the stockholders?"

Digitized by Google

"They'd increase."

"Are you sure of that?"

Tommy stiffened. "I know I've talked like a silly ass, Mr. Thompson. But—"

"That's why I hired you. From to-day on your salary will be thirty dollars a week."

Tommy felt the blood rush to his cheeks. Also he then and there composed a telegram to send to his father. Then it seemed to him it couldn't be true. Then that though it was true, it couldn't last.

"Mr. Thompson, I—I don't know how to thank you," he stammered.

"Then don't try. And although you are not entitled to it by our rules and regulations, you will get two weeks' vacation, beginning Saturday, on full pay at the new rate. I'm going away to-day myself. As for your future—" He paused and frowned slightly.

Tommy knew it! It couldn't last!

"Yes, sir?"

"I'm afraid I'm going to keep you." And Mr. Thompson turned his back on Tommy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV

TOMMY'S first thought after leaving Mr. Thompson's office was that he ought to go to New York and see his father. But almost instantly he dismissed it. The two weeks on full pay at the new salary were not given to him as a vacation to be idle in, but as a heaven-sent opportunity to help Bill ten hours a day. It was only later that he thought he would also be helping himself in so doing.

He told Bill the news, and before Bill's congratulations had more than begun he suggested that Bill try to get two weeks off, so that they could work together.

"Nothing doing."

"How do you know?"

"I've tried," said Bill.

Bill then told Tommy that he had made some changes in the apparatus, but they had not helped a bit.

"Are you thinking of a trip round the world just because you thought you had a patent?" asked Tommy.

Digitized by Google

"I was only thinking of you," said Bill, quietly. He did not wish to fight. He was not discouraged. In fact, the problem was so much bigger than his original carburetor notion that he was quite reconciled to working on it a thousand years if necessary. He knew he would solve it. The tough part, of course, was that somebody else might reach the Patent Office ahead of him.

"You needn't think of me. Think of the work, old top," said Tommy, amiably. "If instead of being an Irish terrier you were an English bulldog, you'd never let go your grip."

"I haven't," said Bill; "but I'm going to bed."

"Thank Heaven to-morrow is Saturday," said Tommy. "We'll have the whole afternoon. We'll try—"

"Don't talk about it or I won't sleep," said Bill, so unpugnaciously that Tommy felt as if Bill were in a hospital.

"Everything is all right, Bill," he said, and shook hands with his partner. Bill brightened up a bit. But it was Tommy who found it impossible to sleep. Valuable patents evidently were like good gold-mines—few and far between. He clearly saw the folly of his hopes; and then he convinced himself that wisdom lay not in hopelessness, but in patience.

After all, he was now getting thirty dollars a

Digitized by Google

week. He could send fifty dollars a month to his father and still be much better off than he was at the beginning. But seventeen thousand dollars was an appalling sum!

And yet as he thought with his head and hoped with his heart, he felt that he was on the point of becoming valuable to the Tecumseh organization. He knew—how, he did not stop to demonstrate—that he had left the "prep" school and was about to enter college, the wonderful step by which a boy becomes a man in one day. There was nothing that Tommy could not become—under Thompson! He was free under a very wise chief. Upon the heels of this thought came contentment, and with contentment came sleep.

The experiments in the little shop in Mrs. Clayton's woodshed were more encouraging for the next few days. Bill had not sent the generator and the transformer to Mr. Kemble. He wished to make the kerosene ionize as rapidly at high as at low speed. The mechanical means at their command, however, seemed more than ever inadequate for the work.

On Saturday morning, the last day of Tommy's vacation, Bill received a letter from Mr. Kemble, the patent lawyer. He read it very carefully. Then he folded it and put it back in the envelope. He looked at Tommy and said, very quietly:

Digitized by Google

"I knew it!"

Tommy looked at the envelope, saw Kemble's name on the upper left-hand corner, and felt himself grow pale.

"No patent?" he asked. His dream, notwithstanding all his self-admonitions against exaggerated hopes, crashed about his head and left him stunned.

"Read it!" said Bill, and turned away.

Tommy drew in a deep breath, reached for the death-warrant, and said: "Cheer up, Bill! We are not dead and buried by a long shot."

"I was thinking of you," said Bill.

"So was I," laughed Tommy. Bill's eyes gleamed with admiration.

Tommy read the letter without a tremor.

DEAR MR. BYRNES,—Referring to the carburetor you submitted to me last week, I am inclosing with this letter copy of a patent issued last December to B. France, which is the only prior patent I have been able to find at all pertinent to your subject. I am not prepared at the present moment to say whether you infringe upon it or not, but there is a serious doubt. I think I should consult with Professor Jenkins again, as soon as you have been able to make some of the tests and investigations he suggested. It will be necessary for you to ascertain as definitely as possible exactly what are the effects and limitations of your alternating-current apparatus. It would be well to build and try out France's device, in an experimental way, of course, for the purpose of

Digitized by Google

analyzing it and the differences that exist. With the results of this work before me, I could probably reach a definite conclusion on the question of infringement. I have not failed to note that whereas your resulting gas is of such a character as to permit your engine to be started cold, France has not mentioned this very important subject, and by his omission I conclude that he has not obtained that important result. This suggests a substantial and possibly fundamental difference between your invention and his; but I must confess his patent appears to have been drawn to cover a device such as yours using the alternating current. Consequently you will see the advisability of pursuing your investigations along the lines mentioned, to the end of ascertaining whether yours is an independent invention or merely another form of France's. It will not be necessary, in view of your successful reduction of your invention to actual practice, to file an application until the subject has been further illumined. Your dates are protected, but you should proceed with your experiments without delay, and I shall be interested in hearing the results or to talk with you further in connection with the inclosed patent.

Very truly yours,
HUDSON G. KEMBLE.

"What did you want to scare me for, you murderer?" reproached Tommy.

"Well, doesn't that mean—"

"It means that we've got to consider what we must do," interrupted Tommy.

"I'll do nothing," said Bill, doggedly.

"Oh yes, you will," contradicted Tommy, pleasantly.

Digitized by Google

"You fool!" shouted Bill, furiously, "what can I do? How can I do it, with only an hour or two after dinner? Do you think I can do anything here when the cold weather comes?"

"Talk to Thompson. He'll find a way. Oh, you needn't think he'll cheat you. I'll vouch for him"—Tommy spoke savagely—"a blamed sight quicker than I would for a suspicious lunkhead of an inventor."

"Yes, he's got you hypnotized," said Bill, with grim decision. Then, because he saw in Tommy's face the loyalty that he himself felt toward Tommy, he went on: "Well, Tommy, I give up. It's all yours. You can talk to Thompson and get what you can out of him."

"No, you will talk to him, and then you can come back and tell me I don't know Thompson. And, anyhow, the time of our discovery is now a matter of record. Nobody can get back of the priority of claim. I tell you, Bill, if you must do business, you'd better pick out a man who is as much of a gentleman in his office as he is in his own home."

"I'm not afraid," said Bill, boldly. "But you arrange for the meeting."

Afraid to talk to Thompson? Tommy almost laughed. Then he remembered that he himself was afraid to talk to Thompson about one thing!

Digitized by Google

But perhaps if he did talk to Thompson about it Thompson might help.

Perhaps!

And Tommy, after half a month of peace, once more thought of the secret.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV

TOMMY was at his old desk in the outer office when Thompson arrived on Monday morning.

"How do you do, Mr. Thompson?" said Tommy, boyishly trying not to look as grateful as he felt.

Thompson stopped and shook hands. "I want to get off some letters. Tell Miss Hollins I need her, won't you? When she comes out you come in"; and Thompson passed on.

Tommy waited for the stenographer to come out of Mr. Thompson's office. Then he walked in.

"Who talks first?" asked Thompson.

Tommy, thinking of Bill's needs, said, "I think I'd better."

"Go ahead!" smiled Thompson.

Then Tommy told him about Bill's experiments and what he and Bill had done and what Professor Jenkins said, and then showed him Mr. Kemble's letter, which Thompson read carefully. Tommy waited. Thompson folded the letter, returned it to Tommy, and said:

Digitized by Google

"Tommy, you knew what you didn't have, so you went to the right place to get it."

"Yes, sir. Bill wants to see you."

Thompson laughed, somewhat to Tommy's surprise, and said, "Go and bring him in now."

Presently Tommy appeared with Bill.

"Good morning, Mr. Thompson," said Bill.

Thompson nodded. Then he asked Bill, quietly, "Well?"

"Tommy told you, I believe."

"He didn't tell me what sort of man you are nor what sort of man you think I am. So all I can ask you is: What do you really want me to do?"

"I don't want you to do anything," answered Bill, uncomfortably.

"I understand you have been experimenting with a kerosene-carburetor. A carburetor is one of a thousand problems to us. To you it is your only problem. Please bear that in mind. You may develop something of great value to all users of explosive engines. But I cannot tell you the exact number of dollars I'll pay for the improvements and patents you haven't got yet. I propose, instead, this: Give us the refusal of your inventions and improvements. Let your own lawyer draw up the papers that you and he think necessary to prevent us from buying your brains

Digitized by Google

too cheaply. I believe you are honest, and I always bet on my judgment. That's my business."

"But suppose you thought my price was too high?" asked Bill, defiantly.

"You are free to sell to the highest bidder. I think we can afford to pay as much as the next man. To make it fair for us to have the first call on your inventions, we will give you the use of the shop and laboratories, machinery, materials, and such help as you need. Then we'll lend you money for your living expenses, on your unsecured notes, without interest, for as long a time as you need—say, five or ten years. You will take out the patents in your own name at your own expense. You don't have to assign them to us. If we pay you on a royalty basis we pledge ourselves not to keep others from using your inventions if we ourselves don't. You come and see me when you've settled the conditions and terms to your satisfaction. Bring as many lawyers with you as you wish. Now, Bill," finished Mr. Thompson, "go ahead and ask your two questions."

"What two questions?" asked Bill, who had followed Mr. Thompson's speech with some difficulty by reason of a surprise not far removed from incredulity.

Digitized by Google

"First, why I offer to do so much for you without binding you to sell to us at our own price; and, second, where the joker is in my offer, anyhow."

"I wasn't going to ask anything of the kind." Bill spoke with much dignity.

"They are perfectly natural questions to ask, unless you had made up your mind to accept any offer blindly. I'd like to answer them, anyhow."

"Then I guess you'd better," said Bill, a trifle defiantly.

"I made that proposition to you because I've made it to others. I want you to realize as quickly as you can that in working for the company you are working for yourself. When a man is neither a hog nor an ass, I am perfectly willing to do business with him on his own terms. Just take it for granted that I know you as well as you know yourself. Am I taking such an awful risk, Bill?"

"But you don't know me," said Bill, in duty bound.

Thompson smiled. "Well, your first question is answered. Now for the second."

"There is no need of it, Mr. Thompson," said Bill, with decision.

"Give me the pleasure of letting me tell you that there is no joker."

Digitized by Google

Bill looked steadily at Mr. Thompson and said, "I didn't think there was any."

"But now you know it," said Thompson.

"And I want to say that Tommy here is my partner—" began Bill.

"That's all nonsense," interjected Tommy, quickly.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Thompson, very seriously, "that's all nonsense. But both of you had better look a long time before you swap that kind of nonsense for wisdom. Don't be brothers in business if you want to be rich and lonely. Bill, Tommy is buncoing us out of thirty dollars a week. Is that enough for you?"

"It's more than enough," said Bill, eagerly.

"Then it is just enough to be contented with. Get to work as soon as you can. You have no time to waste, because from now on Byrnes is working for Byrnes. It will suit me down to the ground. Draw up your own contract and bring it here."

Bill looked at Thompson. Then he said, resolutely, "I will!"

"Both of you go somewhere now and talk it over. Tommy, I'll see you to-morrow about your own work. I've got a man-sized job for you. Good morning." Thompson nodded and, turning to his desk, pushed one of the row of call-

Digitized by Google

buttons. His attitude showed he expected no further speech, so they left the room without another word.

Outside Tommy turned to Bill. "What did I tell you—hey?"

"You poor pill, do you think I've worked here two years for nothing? You bet I'll get a hustle on. Do you think we ought to get a lawyer?"

"Yes; he meant what he said. You needn't worry about the price he'll pay for your invention. Just get to work."

"What is your job going to be?" asked Bill, curiously.

"I don't know. But I hope—" Tommy caught himself on the verge of expressing the hope that it would be something which might enable him to bury the secret once for all.

"What do you hope, Tommy?"

"That you will land with both feet, now that you have a decent place to experiment in," said Tommy. He couldn't say anything else to poor Bill, could he? It wasn't his secret to share with anybody, and, anyhow, he meant what he said.

Mr. Thompson did not make his appearance at the works until late in the afternoon. He told Tommy:

"You'll have to dine with me to-night, Tommy. Will you?"

Digitized by Google

"Yes, sir." Then realizing that he merely had obeyed a superior, he added, in his personal capacity, "De-lighted!"

"Has Bill done anything?"

"He consulted Mr. Williams."

Thompson shook his head. "He is our lawyer."

"That's why Bill picked him out," said Tommy. He felt like adding that he thought Bill considered that the Thompsonian thing to do. Thompson looked at him meditatively.

"What a wonderful thing youth is," he mused, "and how very wise in its unwisdom." He nodded to himself. Then: "You let Bill alone. He's saved. To-night at six-thirty. Mrs. Thompson has not yet returned, but you are going to meet her as soon as she does. You might take Bill to La Grange and say I said Bill was to have everything he asks for. Don't bother to dress, Tommy." Mr. Thompson nodded, a trifle absently it seemed to Tommy, and went into his office. And Tommy wasn't aware that the mixing of his personal affairs with the shop's business made him belong to the company utterly.

After dinner, as they drank their coffee in the library, Thompson asked him:

"Don't you smoke?"

"Not any more."

Digitized by Google

"Why not?"

"I gave up smoking when I felt I couldn't afford it. I smoked rather expensive cigarettes."

"You can afford them now."

"Well, I don't quite feel that I can; and, anyhow, the craving isn't very strong."

"Tommy, my idea of happiness would be the conviction that the more I smoked the better I'd feel. Do you mind talking shop here, Tommy?"

"Not a bit; in fact, I—" He caught himself on the verge of saying that Mr. Thompson could not pick out a more pleasing topic. Thompson smiled slightly. Then he leaned back in his chair and relaxed physically.

"Tommy"—he spoke very quietly—"I think I know you now so that I don't have to ask you to tell me anything more about yourself. In fact, I know you so well that I am going to talk to you about myself."

Tommy's expectancy was aroused to such a high pitch so suddenly that he was distinctly conscious of a thrill. Mr. Thompson went on:

"Can you guess what made me go into automobile manufacturing?"

"I suppose you saw very clearly the possibilities of the business," ventured Tommy, not overconfidently. It seemed too commonplace a reason, and yet it was common sense.

Digitized by Google

"I won't be modest with you, Tommy. I'll say right out that few men who develop a big business successfully are primarily concerned with the cash profits. The work itself must grip them. Of course when the reward is money, if they make a great deal this merely proves how efficient their work is. As a matter of fact, I went into this business twelve years ago because—" Thompson paused. His eyes were half closed and his lips half smiling, as if he were looking at young Thompson and rather enjoying the sight; the paternal mood that comes over a man of forty when he gets a glimpse of the boy he used to be. He went on, "Because I had a dream about a pair of roller-skates."

"Roller-skates? Were you in that business?"

"I wasn't in any business. I had tried half a dozen things, only to give them up. And each time people told me I was a fool not to stick to what I was in, especially as I was making good. But I couldn't see myself devoting my whole life to such work. I was on my way to talk to a man who had lost all his teeth. He had a proposition that looked good to me."

He glanced at Tommy, but Tommy shook his head and paid Thompson the stupendous compliment of not smiling.

"Don't you see, my boy, he had no teeth, but

Digitized by Google

he had brains. Therefore he capitalized his misfortune. He'd got dyspepsia because he could not masticate and hated soup. So he invented a machine for chewing food not only for the toothless, but for the thoughtless who bolt their food. Not a food-chopper, but a food-grinder. No more dyspepsia; no need of Fletcherizing; the machine did it for you. He had evolved a series of easy maxillary motions to stimulate the salivary glands, and he had gathered together hundreds of quotations from the poets and from scientists and wise men of all time. I tell you it promised.

"Well, as I was going along, cheered by the vision of an undyspeptic country as well as of our selling campaign, a little boy bumped into me—hard! But I didn't get angry with him, because he was on roller-skates, and I then and there had one of my dreams. I saw a day when all sidewalks would consist of two parallel tracks or roadways, very smooth, of some vitrified material. And I saw every human being with a pair of rubber-tired auto-skates run by radium batteries. And, of course, that made me decide not to see the toothless man but to go into automobiles."

Tommy was listening with his very soul. The more we know of our heroes the less apt we are to worship them. But this hero's autobiography,

Digitized by Google

instead of destroying illusions, really intensified the sense of difference on which most hero-worship is founded.

"My mind," observed Tommy, ruefully, "wouldn't work that way."

"Oh yes, it would if you'd let it, instead of thinking that dreaming is folly. A man who keeps his eyes open can get valuable suggestions from even his most futile wishes. Autos were considered luxuries then, but I saw the second phase, even to the greater health of the community and the increase in suburban land values. Better artificial lighting has lengthened man's working-day, but the stupendous world-revolution of the nineteenth century was effected by the locomotive and the steamship. When man ceased to depend upon wind and oats for moving from place to place, he changed politics, science, commerce—everything. Indeed, all the *isms* that now afflict us have arisen from the changes which make it impossible for the old-time famines to follow crop failures in certain localities. They have raised the standard of living and should have put an end to poverty as they have to political inequality. Well, there is no need to philosophize about it."

"It is very interesting," said Tommy.

"Yes, it is. That is why I went into the manufacture of automobiles. They are a necessity.

Digitized by Google

That is precisely why I want this company to be doing business long after you and I are dust and forgotten."

Thompson looked at Tommy, a heavy frown on his face—exactly as if he were fighting on, even after death, thought Tommy. It made the youngster whisper, "Yes!"

"So I formed the company. I had to dwell on the money profit to raise capital. Nobody knew I was a dreamer. I began without experience, but I saw to it, Tommy, that I also began without prejudices. I have learned a great deal in ten years. I have studied automobiles constantly, but even when I was working merely to make money I saw the work going on after me. So I have felt it necessary to study men even more closely than machinery and manufacturing processes. No man can tell what the product of this company will be twenty years hence; it may be flying-machines. But we ought to know the men who will be running it then—the product of the company's policy! The kind of men I want to-day is the kind that will be wanted to-morrow, that will be wanted always! Do you see?"

"Yes, sir," said Tommy.

"It was no hard job to make money. It was infinitely harder to convince my associates that there was more money in reducing our immediate

Digitized by Google

profits in order to make ours a permanent investment. I am now ready to throw a million dollars' worth of machinery and patterns into the scrap-heap. We shall manufacture a car very soon that will not need much changing for ten years. Of course we'll improve and refine and simplify it as we find advisable. I'll be able to carry out some of my dreams now. This time the dream comes after the product!"

Tommy did not know what the dream was and he couldn't see the product; but he imagined a wonderful time to come.

"It's great!" he gasped.

"It is more difficult to eliminate the undesirable man than the inefficient employee. My men are not yet all that I wish, but they will be after they have worked in our new plant a few months. I have studied all the methods that manufacturers and managers have used to foster and reward the competitive spirit among workmen. I want team-work as well as individual efficiency, but my men must all be Tecumseh men. Do you love the company?"

"You bet I do!" And Tommy's eyes glistened.

"Are you sure it isn't merely gratitude for Thompson?" And Thompson looked so serious that Tommy was compelled to be honest. He thought before he answered.

Digitized by Google

"Of course it is both."

"I don't want you to think of Thompson, but of the Tecumseh."

"But how can I think of the company and not think of you?"

"By thinking not of the president and not of yourself, but of the work—the work that will be here long after Thompson and Leigh are gone. I will give you an opportunity to develop yourself along those lines which will most gratify the desires of your grown manhood."

Tommy nodded his head twice quickly, and drew in a deep breath.

"To be intelligently selfish you must be intelligently unselfish. You must love the Tecumseh for what the Tecumseh will do for you. Do you see that?"

"Yes," answered Tommy; "but I'd love it even if—"

"That's because you are a boy with a wonderful unlived life. Keep it up, because unreasoning love is a good foundation for the maturer habit of affection from which I expect the Tecumseh stockholders and the Tecumseh employees alike to benefit. I am after a family feeling. Some day I'll tell you the story of Bob Holland, the treasurer of the company, the only man I know who thinks of dollars as an annoying necessity,

Digitized by Google

but of the Tecumseh finances in terms of health insurance. He is one of my Experiments." And Thompson smiled.

Knowing that he also was one and fearing because he was, Tommy, who did not feel like smiling, smiled as he asked:

"Are all your Experiments always successful?"

"Always," answered Thompson, emphatically. "Always," he repeated, and looked unsmilingly at Tommy. And Tommy made up his mind that the least he could do was to see to it that Thompson's record was not broken.

"Grosvenor is another, and Nevin," went on Thompson. "You know them. La Grange is still a Sophomore, but on the right road. Bill Byrnes is a first-day Freshman. Watch him. I won't give the others away. You know Leonard Herrick?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you don't know why I pay him a salary?"

"No, sir."

"For his grouch. I made him cultivate it, until from being merely a personal pleasure he elevated it to the dignity of an impersonal art. What was only a grouch has become intelligent faultfinding. He is the cantankerous customer on tap, the flaw-picking perfection-seeker, our critic-in-chief. He is a walking encyclopedia of

Digitized by Google

objections, and they have to be good ones. He's a wonder!"

Thompson paused and looked at Tommy doubtfully. Tommy wondered why.

"It used to worry me whenever I thought of that man's family life, so I looked about for a wife for him, and when I found the woman I wanted I married him off to her before he could say Jack Robinson. She is very happy. She is stone-deaf and has borne him two children—both girls. I didn't arrange for their sex, Tommy; honest I didn't; but I prayed for girls! Anyhow, he got them. He'll butt his head against them in vain; they are women and they will be modern women. They will preserve his grouch until he's through living. His usefulness to the company will thus be unimpaired and he'll die in harness, grouchy and an asset to the end. Do you still want to know whether all my Experiments are successful?"

Thompson looked so meaningly at Tommy that Tommy flushed as he answered:

"I don't know whether I can ever do anything to repay you—"

"The company, Tommy," corrected Thompson, quickly.

"But I know I'd rather work here for five dollars a week than anywhere else for a hundred."

Digitized by Google

"That answers your question. Now for your job!" Thompson became so serious that Tommy knew his would be a difficult task. Well, he would do it or die trying!

"Your job is to be the one man in the employ of the Tecumseh Motor Company who can walk into the president's private office at any time without knocking."

Thompson was frowning so earnestly that Tommy felt a sharp pang of mortification at his own failure to grasp exactly what the job meant. But Thompson went on:

"You will find, Tommy, that even wise men can be unreasonable and square men can be petty and brave men can whine—at times. But in the end their errors correct themselves, just as political fallacies do in the affairs of a nation. You must help the men to feel toward the Tecumseh as you do. It is a big job. If you make good I can tell you that all of us will be in your debt, no matter what your salary may be."

Thompson spoke so earnestly that Tommy said: "How can I ever be to them what you are to me? How can I possibly be that?"

"Always be ready to put yourself in the other man's place, but insist upon a fair exchange and make him put himself in your place, which is very difficult indeed, but not impossible. The

Digitized by Google

new plant will make it easier for you. It will be the model plant of the world, not only as to machinery, but also as to comfort and looks! I will make the men boast of it. I have elaborate plans for the democratization of this place, and I am not neglecting self-interest or vanity. Bonuses, pensions, honor rolls, and such things are easy. What is not so easy is to make the men glad to work for and with the company. I haven't many precedents to guide me, and so many plans that promised well and looked fine on paper have failed, sometimes failed inexplicably. My men must be both free men and Tecumseh men, and they have no life habit to help them in this—such as the convention of patriotism, for example. I warn you, Tommy, that you must be one of my principal assistants. You will represent in my office all the men who are getting less than ten dollars a day. You must do more than present their grievances —anticipate them! There is no string to this. In fighting for them you will be fighting for me and for yourself and for the whole Tecumseh family. And now do you want to let me beat you at billiards before you go home?"

"Mr. Thompson, I couldn't hold a cue just now if my life depended on it. I want to think about what you have told me. I'm afraid I am not old enough to—"

Digitized by Google

"I've given you the biggest job in the shop because, being very young, you have no experience to make a coward of you. And don't think too much about the preambles to your own speeches hereafter. Good night, Tommy."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI

TOMMY did more hard thinking in the next few days than he had done in his four years at college. He blamed himself for his stupidity that prevented him from seeing the first step. He could not visualize his start. Notwithstanding Thompson's admonition, it was usually the preamble to the speech that was the stumbling-block, for Tommy did not know that there is work which not the head but the heart must do.

Since he could not formulate a plan of campaign in detail, he simply walked about the shop talking genial generalities to the men. He did not know that while he was trying to be a friend to these men they also were becoming friends to him, and he presently found himself telling them all he knew about the new plant, of which they had heard vague rumors, of the better times that were coming, and how one of the greatest problems of all time was settled here, since all jobs were going to be life jobs. And, of course, he could not help asking them one at a time what really was needed

Digitized by Google

to make their life in the shop better, more comfortable, and more worth while working for.

They took him at his word, because though he was young and utterly inexperienced he was also wise enough to listen to wisdom. They answered his questions and freely gave of their own infallibility. He heard architects when he wanted sociologists and lawyers when he wanted brothers, and political economists when he wanted college boys; but he was wise enough to continue to listen attentively. He asked each man confidentially whether it would be possible for him to evolve a plan that would make them all one family. And each promised to think about it. In fact, many even promised to give Tommy the one plan that would do it.

Thompson had little to say to Tommy. He made no suggestions and asked for no reports. But one day, as Tommy was going into the laboratory to see Bill Byrnes, he met the president. He saw that Thompson had something important to say.

"Tommy, have the men given you a nickname yet?"

"They all call me Tommy."

"But a nickname?"

"Well,"—and Tommy smiled forgivingly—"some of them call me D. O."

Digitized by Google

"What does that mean?"

"Door Opener!"

Thompson's face lighted up. He held out his hand and he shook Tommy's so congratulatorily that Tommy realized in part what had happened. He felt that he was progressing.

"Keep on the job, D. O. Remember that miracles are worked with men by men, and not by machinery nor by wages alone." And Thompson walked off, smiling.

Tommy walked into Bill's new quarters. Bill was happy beyond words, having no financial cares. His contract called for the sale of his patents to the Tecumseh at a price and on a basis to be determined by three men, one chosen by Byrnes, one by the company, and the third by both the others.

"How's Charlotte?" asked Tommy, for Bill's sister had not been well.

"Better. That specialist that Mr. Thompson got from Cleveland to see her has done her a lot of good."

"You never told me about that, Bill," said Tommy, reproachfully.

"Well, Thompson asked me about my family and I told him about her—or, rather, he guessed it. How he did it I don't know. And I kind of thought that you'd rub it in. But he won't lose

Digitized by Google

anything, I can tell you." Bill saw impending speech in Tommy's face, so he went on hastily in order to avert it: "I've got a cinch here, Tommy. We'll all be rich yet, you bet! And say, La Grange knows more than I thought. Now watch this." And Bill began to put his new apparatus through its paces for Tommy's benefit.

It had worked successfully fifty times that day; but on this, the fifty-first, before a witness, it balked.

"Yes, that's fine!" said Tommy, with great enthusiasm, and waited for the profanity.

But Bill merely frowned and fumbled with the wires. Then he exclaimed, blithely: "Sure thing; the nut worked off! It never happened before, and you can bet it never will again. Now watch it!"

Tommy watched it. It worked smoothly. Then Bill took the apparatus to pieces and showed Tommy that the vaporization of the kerosene had been complete.

"I've made a lot of improvements. La Grange is working now on the generator. He is really a good electrician," said Bill, with an air of doing justice to a friend who had his faults as all men, even the best, have. Tommy laughed outright. The change in Bill's nature, now that he had no worries, struck him as being quite funny.

Digitized by Google

"What's biting you?" asked Bill.

"Oh," said Tommy, "I just thought of something. Keep on the job, Bill. Your friends and your country need you."

Bill was again at work before Tommy walked out of the room. A great world this, thought Tommy, in which each man had his work, in which he could think of himself and gratify his personal desires, and withal one in which the work of each man would harmonize and merge with the work of the others. He felt a greater admiration for Thompson than ever, but he also began to feel that even without Thompson it was well to work for the Tecumseh Motor Company. If Thompson lived he certainly would make the Tecumseh greater than Thompson.

During the following fortnight Tommy was able to fill himself with joy by bringing some grievances to Thompson. They were minor affairs, but Thompson treated them as seriously as though they were disasters. They were adjusted to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Sometime afterward Thompson sent for Tommy.

"Tommy," said Thompson, his eyes on Tommy's, "I think you ought to go to New York."

Tommy's face showed consternation. "What's happened, Mr. Thompson? My father—"

'Oh no. I have remembered what you told

Digitized by Google

me about getting 'ads' for your college paper. Well, we are going to double our capital stock. Our stockholders are perfectly able and anxious to subscribe to the new issue, but I want you to place some of it among your friends, since you cannot take any yourself. A little later I hope to perfect a plan whereby you and all the men who stay with us will be able to get some of the stock on terms that all of you can meet. I want you, Tommy, to feel a personal responsibility in the management of the company. You can do it by inducing personal friends to buy a couple of thousand shares of our stock. I have prepared a statement showing what we have done and what we are doing, and an estimate of what we expect to do. Our books and our plant are open for examination by any expert your friends may want to send here. We shall have a big surplus, and the book value of the shares will always be much more than par; but we are going to reduce the price of our car every chance we get, and we are going to provide for pensions and life insurance and bonuses for the men. We have no Utopian schemes, and no more elaborate theory than the desire to make this a permanent and continuously productive organization. I don't want any man for a stockholder who expects the company to run its business as he would not have the nerve

Digitized by Google

or the conscience to run his own. I am going not only to give, but to take a chance in giving. The statement I have prepared for you here is for your guidance, that you may make my intentions clear to your friends. You don't have to call attention to the big fortunes that have been made in the automobile business, because I wish you to interest only people who already are interested in Tom Leigh."

Tommy's feeling of relief had grown as Mr. Thompson spoke. He ceased to think of certain dark possibilities. But there still remained one.

"I don't know whether I can sell the stock or not, Mr. Thompson."

"I don't expect you to succeed. I only expect you to try," Thompson reminded him.

"Of course I'll try," said Tommy, hastily.

"My reasons are good business reasons, Tommy, because I have your future in mind. Can you leave to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well."

Tommy hesitated; then he held out his hand and said, "Good-by, Mr. Thompson."

"Wait a minute. Tell the cashier to let you have a hundred dollars expense account." Then he shook hands. "Place that stock, Tommy!" he said.

Digitized by Google

A little later, when he said good-by to Bill Byrnes, Tommy realized for the first time how deeply rooted in Dayton his life was. He didn't feel that he was going home, but that he was leaving it!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII

THE train rushed eastward, but Tommy's thoughts reached New York first. He did it by considering the task that Thompson had given him to do. He read the typewritten statement very carefully, studied the statistics of growth and profits and values, and fervently blessed Thompson, who had taken pains clearly to indicate the significance of each item so that nobody could fail to understand.

From that Tommy passed on to an elaborate dramatization of his own stock-selling campaign. He rehearsed his speeches to the fathers of the friends who ought to become stockholders of the Tecumseh Motor Company. He heard his own arguments very distinctly indeed, but when he came to listen to theirs he was not so successful. To be on the safe side, he assumed that he had to overcome indifference, distrust, and the exasperating conservatism of old people. It did not occur to him that greed must also be overcome, for he concerned himself with his own inexperi-

Digitized by Google

ence. He felt certain that his own training under Thompson would not be regarded with admiration by Eastern capitalists. And yet in Dayton Thompson was believed to be shrewd and far-seeing, and had built up a successful business, and was about to do much more. And Tommy was one of Thompson's business Experiments.

"I'll show them!" he said aloud. And in his determination there was quite as much loyalty to Thompson as resolve to demonstrate the worth of Thomas F. Leigh.

Having definitely made up his mind to succeed, he began once more at the beginning. He must get Rivington and his other friends to arrange for meetings with their fathers. The speeches would say themselves when the time came. It all depended upon what manner of men the fathers were. And then he began to think of his own father.

The human mind works curiously. In order to think about his father Tommy found himself compelled to think about himself. The secret had driven him to Dayton. It had taken away his happiness, and in exchange had given to him Thompson, Byrnes, Grosvenor, Nevin, La Grange, and the men in the shop—more real friends than he had in New York. It had given to him not only something to do, but something to do gladly.

Digitized by Google

The friends and the work had increased his own power to fight. He must always fight everybody, everything that antagonized his friends and his work. After all, what was the secret but the wonderful story of an old man's unreasoning love for his only son, of a loyalty to his wife so steadfast that death had but made it stronger?

Well, as soon as the money was paid back the first thing Tommy would do would be to tell Thompson all about it. Then Tommy could be proud of his father's deed before all men, who would understand. A man who would do such a thing for a son was a big man. To make such a sacrifice for a son who was not worthy of it—that would be the tragedy!

"I'll show them!" again muttered Tommy, through his teeth. And that was exactly how Tommy came back to his starting-point. He would place the two thousand shares of stock! He would be all business. And yet he regretted that all he had said in his telegram to his father was, "Will arrive in New York to-morrow on business." But he was glad he had signed it as a loving son would sign it, "Tommy"!

When he arrived he felt that he had been absent from New York so long that he really was no longer a part of the life of the town. He had a sense almost of provincialism. He did not quite belong.

Digitized by Google

He did not thrill, as he had expected, at the familiar sights and the typical noises and the characteristic odors. The New-Yorkers he saw were unmistakably New-Yorkers, but they were utter strangers to him.

It was an old Daytonian who rang the bell of his house. But Maggie, who opened the door, also opened her mouth at the sight of him and kept it open. And it was not a Daytonian who shouted, delightedly:

"Hello, Margarita! How be you?"

He was so glad to see her in the house where he was born, so full of the joy of home-coming, that Dayton utterly vanished from the map of his soul.

"Where is he?" he asked her.

"Up-stairs in the lib'ry," answered Maggie, quite proudly. Then, as by an afterthought, she said, very calmly, "Ye're lookin' well."

"So are you!" he said, and gave her a hug. "How's your steady?"

It was the old, old joke. But she whispered unsmilingly in reply, "He's waitin' fer ye in th' lib'ry."

Tommy ran up the stairs three steps at a time. He was going to empty himself of his love and the oceans of his youth upon his father. Mr. Leigh was standing beside the table on which were the

Digitized by Google

family Bible, the ivory paper-cutter, and the silver-framed photograph of Tommy's mother. The photograph was not in the center, as usual, but near the edge of the table; and it was not facing the old man, but the door through which Tommy must enter.

"Hello, dad!" cried Tommy.

Mr. Leigh held his left hand behind his back, where Tommy could not see that it was clenched so tightly that the knuckles showed cream-white, like bare bones. The right hand he extended toward Tommy.

"How do you do, Thomas?" said Mr. Leigh, quietly. His face was impassive, but his eyes were very bright. A little older, he seemed to Tommy. Not grayer or more wrinkled or feebler, simply older, as though it came from something within.

Tommy shook his father's hand vehemently. He held it tightly while he answered: "If I felt any better I'd make my will, knowing it couldn't last. And you are pretty well yourself?"

"Yes," said Mr. Leigh, simply. Then: "I am very glad to see you, my son. Do you wish to spruce up before dinner? I'll wait."

"I sha'n't keep you a minute," said Tommy, and left the room feeling not so much disappointed as dazed by his own inability to empty himself of all the love he had firmly intended to pour upon

Digitized by Google

his father's head. And then, possibly because of the instinctive craving for a reason, he recalled that his father seemed more aged.

"Worry!" thought Tommy. He felt a pang of pity that changed sharply into fear. "Poor dad!" he thought, and then the fear spurred him into the fighting mood. He would stand by his father. He would assure him of his loyalty. They would fight together.

He found Mr. Leigh leaning back in his arm-chair before the table on which stood the silver-framed photograph of Tommy's mother. There was a suggestion of weariness in the old man's attitude, but on Tommy's entrance he rose quickly to his feet and, without looking at Tommy, said:

"Dinner is ready, Thomas."

They left the library together, but at the head of the stairs Mr. Leigh stepped aside to let Tommy go first. Tommy obeyed instinctively. The old man followed.

"It feels good to be back, dad," said Tommy. "It seems to me that I really have not been away from this house more than a day or two." He turned his head to look at his father's face, and stumbled so that he almost fell.

Mr. Leigh, his face terror-stricken, reached out his hand to catch his son. "Tom—" he gasped.

Digitized by Google

Then as Tommy recovered himself his father remarked, quietly, "You should not try to do two things at once, Thomas."

Tommy could see that Maggie had strongly impressed upon the cook the fact that Master Thomas had favorite dishes; but neither she nor his father made any allusions to them. It made Tommy almost smile. The reason he didn't was that part of him did not at all feel like smiling. They must have cost money that his father wished to save. So, instead, he talked of Dayton and his friends, and his desire to have his father know them, at which his father nodded gravely. But when Tommy said:

"Now, Mr. Thompson wanted me to come to New York to—"

Mr. Leigh interrupted. "After dinner, Thomas, you will tell me all about it while you smoke."

"I don't smoke," said Tommy, with the proud humility of a martyr. But his father said nothing, and Tommy wondered whether the old man, not being himself a smoker, understood.

After dinner, in order that his father might understand the situation as it was, Tommy spoke in detail about Thompson—an elaborate character sketch to which his father listened gravely, nodding appreciatively from time to time. Occasionally Mr. Leigh frowned, and Tommy, see-

Digitized by Google

ing this, explained how those were the new business ideals of the great West, where Americanism was more robust than in the East—as though Tommy himself had been born and brought up west of the Rockies.

"And so I am going to try to place the two thousand shares of Tecumseh stock among personal friends. I'm going to see Rivington Willetts to-morrow morning—"

"Wait. Before you seek to interest investors you ought to be thoroughly familiar with the finances of the company, and I scarcely think your work or your training has given you the necessary knowledge."

"I shall try to interest friends only, or their fathers. And I know as much as there is to know, since I have the figures in black and white—"

"The vender's figures, Thomas," interjected Mr. Leigh in a warning voice.

"Thompson's figures," corrected Tommy, in the voice of a supreme-court justice citing authorities. He took from his pocket the statement which the president of the Tecumseh Motor Company had given to him.

"Here, father, read this."

While Mr. Leigh read the statement Tommy in turn tried to read his father's face. But he could not see conviction setting itself on Mr.

Digitized by Google

Leigh's features. When Mr. Leigh finished reading he simply said:

"Now the figures."

Tommy silently handed him the sheets with the vital statistics.

Mr. Leigh looked them over, and Tommy was amazed at the change in the old man's face. It took on an alertness, a look of shrewd comprehension which Tommy never before had seen on it. Then he remembered that his father was an accountant, doubtless an expert at figures. And then he remembered also what his father had been able to do through being an expert at figures.

The reaction made Tommy feel faint and cold.

Mr. Leigh leisurely folded the sheets together and silently returned them to his son.

"Well?" said Tommy, not knowing that he spoke sharply because the secret had come to life again in this room. "What do you think of it now?"

"Did Mr. Thompson himself prepare these figures?"

"Yes—at least I think so. Why?"

"It is a remarkable statement, prepared by an expert for the sole benefit of laymen who don't know anything about accounts, which is something that expert accountants are not usually able to do, since they do not work for the ignorant. A

Digitized by Google

highly intelligent exhibit, because it is easily intelligible and withal free from technical subterfuges. I can vouch for its honesty. But I do not think you can interest capital with this literature, Thomas."

"But you haven't grasped the point, father. I am not looking for capital, but for friends—"

"With capital. It is the same, as far as concerns the owners of the capital."

Tommy had feared the same thing, and also had feared to believe it.

"I must do it somehow," said Tommy, very earnestly.

"I naturally wish you to succeed, Thomas," said Mr. Leigh, very quietly. After a pause he added, almost diffidently: "Possibly, I—I might be able to help you, my son—"

"I must do it myself," interjected Tommy, quickly. "I—I must."

Mr. Leigh seemed on the point of saying something that Tommy might not like to hear, but checked himself and finally said: "I hope you may succeed. It will be difficult work and—But you must be tired from your traveling?"

He looked at Tommy doubtfully, and Tommy, who wished to be alone with his thoughts and his new heartache, said:

"I am, rather; but I thought I'd take a look

Digitized by Google

at the evening papers. I'll go out and get them."

"You will find them in the library—all of them."

"All of them?"

"Yes, I—I had forgotten which was your favorite." The old man would not look at his son. Presently he finished: "I'll read the *Post*. Come, my son."

They went up-stairs. Tommy tried to read. He looked at all the papers, but not even the football gossip held his attention. From time to time he looked up, to see his father absorbed in the editorial page of the *Post*. This was evidently a part of his daily routine. Tommy saw him sitting all alone in the gloomy little room called the library, because it had been so christened by his mother long years before. Day in and day out the old man had sat in this room, alone with his thoughts, with the consciousness of loving vows kept at such a cost!

"Father!" irrepressibly cried Tommy.

"Yes?" said Mr. Leigh, emotionlessly. Even in the way in which he laid down his paper on his lap there was that curious leisureliness of senility that somehow savored less of age-feebleness than of years and years of unchanging habit.

"I am going to bed. I want to feel particularly

Digitized by Google

fit to-morrow." Tommy stood there waiting for something, he knew not what exactly—something that might give him the emotional relief he was not fully conscious he needed.

"Good night, Thomas," said Mr. Leigh, and resumed his newspaper.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII

TOMMY was up and dressed at working-man's hours the next morning. He had fought until midnight, and finally pushed his fears into a corner and kept them there. After the friends who always had been friends and, therefore, would continue always to be friends, were stockholders, he would allow himself to think of other things.

He breakfasted with his father, but made no allusions to his work. It was only when he was about to leave the house for the bank that Mr. Leigh, after a moment's hesitation, said to Tommy:

"You must not feel unduly disappointed, Thomas, if you do not succeed at the first attempt. It is not easy to raise capital at any time, and just now the business outlook is not so clear as I wish it might be for your sake. And so, Thomas, if you do not accomplish as much as you wish as quickly as you think you ought to, I think you should realize that I am somewhat familiar with transactions of this character and—and you

Digitized by Google

must remember, Thomas, that I am as much concerned with your success as you yourself."

Mr. Leigh looked at his watch, started nervously, and walked quickly out of the room, as though he were late and feared a scolding. The apprehensive manner chilled Tommy to the marrow of his bones. At the door Mr. Leigh turned and said in a subdued voice, "I wish you luck, my son." A moment later Tommy heard the street door close.

"Poor dad!" muttered Tommy, thinking of his father's unbearable burden, and full of pity for the helplessness that insisted upon helping the son for whom he had done so much. It was Tommy Leigh who must help Tommy Leigh—in order that Tommy Leigh might help his father.

He wondered if Rivington was up. He looked at his watch. It was eight-forty-four. Rivington was not up yet. Tommy went to the corner drug-store, and from there telephoned to the Willetts' house. He told the servant who answered the call to tell Mr. Rivington that Mr. Thomas Leigh would be there at ten sharp—very important!

Rivington was very glad to see Tommy, and showed it in ways that Tommy good-naturedly thought boyish but sincere, and, therefore, pardonable. But Rivington's face showed a quite

Digitized by Google

mature respect when Tommy bluntly told him he wished to see Colonel Willetts on business.

"Does it involve him parting from some of his wad?" asked Rivington.

Tommy perceived that Rivington was still an undergraduate. Therefore he answered in the same language.

"It do, my boy. That is a necessary part of the operation by which I hope to do you the greatest favor one true man can do another."

"The old gentleman is hell on real estate," warned Rivington.

"We own the most valuable portions of the Lord's green footstool in fee simple," said Tommy, reassuringly.

"I tell you again, terra firma is his obsession. And even at that he is from Missouri."

"That's the kind I like. For what else was my larynx made?"

"I always understood," said Rivington, gravely, "that there was money in éditions de luxe, and that nice old widow ladies always fell for the young Demosthenes."

"Lad, it isn't eloquence that I spurt, but a bald narrative of the facts," said Tommy, glad to convince Rivington that he was strictly business.

But Rivington rose to his feet and said, solemnly: "Thomas, I hereby invite you to dine with

Digitized by Google

my family to-night at seven-thirty. I do so officially; and kindly take notice that the invitation has been received by you before you have talked sordid business to my revered parent. Do you accept?"

"I do," said Tommy.

"Very well; I shall spread it on the official minutes of this meeting. I shall tell Marion when she comes in from her ride. That child is a—what would you call her—a centauress or a lady equestrienne?"

"I call her a Christian martyr every time I think of her brother," said Tommy.

"Yes?" said Rivington, very politely. "Well, my father will avenge me. I'll let him know that we'll be down at his office with an ambulance at three-ten. The stock-market closes at three. He ought to be fit to talk to ten minutes later. And now you come with me. I want to show you my new Parker six."

"Riv, why don't you drive a car?" inquired Tommy, solicitously.

"Haw! Haw! A Tecumseh, hey? Oh, my appendix! Don't make me laugh when I'm driving, Tommily."

"Got a license, son?"

"Better than that. The cops all know me. Come on, I'll learn you something."

Digitized by Google

They rode out into Westchester County, had luncheon at their college club, and shortly after three were at Colonel Willetts's office.

"How do you do, Tommy?" said Colonel Willetts, so pleasantly and unbusiness-like that Tommy felt sorry. "How's the job?" He was a tall, handsome man with a ruddy complexion that went very well with his snow-white military mustache. A casual glance made one think of a martinet; but on closer study one might gather that the colonel was not a disciplinarian at home, but merely liked the pose. There is a vast difference between a capitalist and a captain of industry.

"I'm still on it, Colonel," replied Tommy, thinking of an opening.

"H'm! Can't you find something for a needy friend to do in Dayton? Rivington"—he used the elaborate sarcasm of the fond father who can't control his children because his own program changes daily—"is very anxious to go into business."

"Tommy's business is automobiles and so is mine," cut in Rivington, pleasantly. "I am learning the fine points of the car before I go on the road."

"As far as I can make out, your studies seem to be confined to road laws and all the known varieties of fines."

Digitized by Google

"Talking about the law, Tommy is here to talk business with you. He didn't wish to come, but I broke the law of hospitality and compelled him to do as I said. If he gave me the chance he is going to give you I'd take it on the jump." He turned away and walked toward a window, that his friend and his father might talk business without embarrassment. On the way he whispered to Tommy: "Split commissions—fifty-fifty."

Colonel Willetts looked inquiringly at Tommy. Tommy decided it was no time for boy talk, so he said very earnestly:

"Colonel, I am more concerned with interesting you in our work than with the investment of money in our business. We can save time if you will be good enough to read this statement." And Tommy laid before the colonel Mr. Thompson's program. He took it for granted that his best friend's father not only would read the statement intelligently and sympathetically, but would be glad of the opportunity to do so. Colonel Willetts was looking at him almost with the intentness with which we watch a juggler on the stage. Whereupon Tommy smiled pleasantly to show that he shared the colonel's pleasure in the prospective perusal of the document.

The colonel got down to business. "Is this the prospectus?" he asked, suspiciously.

Digitized by Google

"No, sir, there is no prospectus. The company is not trying to raise money in the open market. It doesn't have to. The paper shows what our plans are. My visit here is merely to give an opportunity for a few of my personal friends to buy stock that I can't buy myself."

"Why can't you?"

Tommy smiled good-naturedly. Evidently the rich don't understand that everybody isn't rich. He answered:

"Because I unfortunately haven't any money."

"H'm!" grunted Colonel Willetts, looking like the chief of the general staff. "H'm! Pure friendship! Fine business reason!"

Tommy felt himself on the verge of becoming annoyed, but he subdued his feelings and answered with what you might call a smile of earnestness.

"Yes, sir—pure friendship. I can't think of a better reason in this world for a man who is not a hog or a dog in the manger."

"H'm! Nothing personal in your remarks, I take it." And the colonel fixed his fiercely frowning eyes on Tommy. He had inherited the bulk of his great fortune, but loved to play at doing business with a martial air.

"Sure, it's personal. Rivington, who is my best friend, happens to be your son. That's my reason. I consider it a very good reason. Even

Digitized by Google

if I wanted to sell stock to a stranger, I wouldn't be allowed to do so."

"Sell stock, hey?"

Tommy did not like the colonel's voice nor his look nor the suggestion of a sneer. So he said: "Won't you please read that statement, Colonel? Just a moment, please. I'd like to say something before you begin."

The colonel looked at him over his eye-glasses and Tommy, his voice ringing with his own sense of the sacredness of his mission, said:

"Whether you take some of the stock or not, I want you to understand very clearly, sir, that every word of that paper is true. I vouch for it personally from my own knowledge. And though it won't hurt the company in the slightest if you should decide not to make Rivington one of our stockholders, it will be a great disappointment to me not to have my friends with me in the work that I propose to devote my life to. Now won't you please read on?"

The colonel without another word began to read the statement that Thompson had prepared for Tommy's benefit. When he finished he pursed up his lips and frowned. He tapped the papers meditatively with his finger-tips for fully a minute before he spoke.

"Tommy, I never mix altruism with business.

Digitized by Google

When I give money I give it. When I invest money I expect all the profit that I am legitimately entitled to."

"All that any man is legitimately entitled to from the labor of others is a fair profit. This is not a gamble—"

"All business is a gamble," interrupted the colonel, shortly.

"Perhaps it wouldn't be if altruism were mixed with it oftener than it is," said Tommy, trying not to speak heatedly. He was Door Opener to the men in the shop—his men. And they were entitled to more than the wages that he thought Colonel Willetts would like to fix for them.

"Are you a socialist?" frowned Colonel Willetts.

"I'm not a regular socialist, but I can see that business in the future must be conducted in a different way. Mr. Thompson is looking ahead farther than most men."

"He thinks he is."

"He really is. You see, Colonel, I know him and you don't," smiled Tommy. Then he said, very impressively, "I consider him the greatest man in this country to-day."

"I have no doubt that you do," observed the colonel, dryly. "But granting he is all that you are so sure he is, he proposes innovations the success of which he cannot possibly guarantee. In

Digitized by Google

special cases for special reasons they might work."

"Well, sir, his record guarantees that. He began in a small way and he has built up a large and very profitable business. The company would have paid much bigger dividends if he hadn't insisted upon putting most of the profits back into the business in order to build permanently. That was good business, wasn't it? And now he is going to carry into effect plans on which he has been working for years. Here is the company's dollar-history, Colonel." And Tommy gave the sheets of figures to the colonel.

The colonel looked at Tommy as if he never before had seen his son's chum. Then he studied the figures. When he finished he turned to Tommy, who instantly anticipated the skeptical questions he thought Colonel Willetts would ask.

"Our books are open for examination by any accountant you may send. I'll agree to pay his expenses if he finds anything that does not confirm what's in that paper." Tommy instantly felt he had spoken hastily. The expert's fee might be utterly beyond his ability to pay. But Thompson had said the experts could be sent. Tommy was betting on Thompson. It was a safe bet, he thought, and he felt easy once more, not knowing that in trusting to his judgment of men he had

Digitized by Google

done the most business-like thing in his business career.

"According to these—er—documents your company expects to make a great deal more than the stockholders will get. You are asking me—I mean the stockholders—to authorize the directors to divide the money which our money makes in any way they see fit."

"Exactly—after a fair profit is paid to the stockholders, because we believe that by sharing profits with the men who produce and the men who buy the product we are dividing the profits among the people that make the profits possible. If labor, capital, and the public are satisfied, where's the fight going to come from?" Tommy had never before thought of profit-sharing as concretely as this, but he was convinced that his position was not only right, but unanswerable.

"Where did you say your factory is—Utopia?" asked the colonel, with elaborate politeness.

"Dayton, Ohio. I'd like to have you visit us."

"Thanks, Tommy. To whom else have you talked about this?"

"My father. He thought it was not a very good time to raise money. But you see, sir, I am not here to raise money to carry on our business, but to ask my friends to buy stock that I'd take in a minute if I had the money."

Digitized by Google

The more Tommy thought about it, the more he wished Rivington might be a large stockholder in the new company that was going to be the world's model corporation.

"Well, Tommy," said Colonel Willetts, after a pause, "I'll tell you frankly, your proposition does not appeal to me."

Tommy's disappointment showed itself in his face, which thereupon became impassive, but unfortunately impassive with a quite obvious effort.

Rivington, who had heard his father's decision, broke in cheerfully: "Market must have gone against you to-day, father. Tommy will come again when you have gathered in the unearned increment."

"Hang it," said the colonel, irascibly, to his only son, "will you ever be serious—"

"No use getting angry, dad. I'll bring Tommy round to-morrow and the day after, and so on. There is more labor involved in our daily trips than in signing one check. In the mean time he is dining with us to-night at home. We expect you to be there. And in case you change your mind— Ah, be a sport, dad! Consider what you owe me!"

"What?"

"When I think of what I might have cost you I am astonished at my moderation."

Digitized by Google

Rivington and his father, as a matter of fact, were as chummy as a fond father and a light-hearted boy full of irresponsibility are bound to be. Colonel Willetts more than once had blessed Rivington's moderation when he thought of Rivington's temptations, but he had never thought very seriously of teaching his son to resist temptation. He turned to Tommy and said:

"If you take him away and make a man of him, I'll take the stock at your own price, Tommy. But look here, my boy, you must learn the first lesson of a business man, and that is not to be disappointed when things don't come your way. It's friends you want, isn't it, among your stockholders?"

"Yes, sir." And Tommy smiled bravely.

"Well, I'll take one hundred shares each for Rivington and Marion. I guess you can count on their proxies forever. It isn't a bad start. If your other friends will do as much you are fixed. I wish you luck."

"Come on, Thomas, we'll call again under more propitious circumstances. Good day, sir." And Rivington saluted his father militarily and escorted Tommy from the office.

Outside, Tommy insisted upon looking up some of his other friends, but Rivington was against it.

"I tell you you'll have to see the old gentleman

Digitized by Google

again. He always says no at first. I guess I ought to know."

"Yes, but even so, I can't expect him to take the whole two thousand shares. That's two hundred thousand dollars, and I don't blame him—"

"Isn't it a good business?"

"Sure, fine."

"Then why shouldn't he take it all? He is always saying it's getting harder every year to find good things to invest in. I tell you, you hold your horses. Even if he didn't take it all he could place the lot among our friends a blamed sight more easily than you. Old people have no use for the beardless Napoleon of Finance. Your trouble, Thomas, is that you are a boy. Listen to me."

"You seem to think I've got all the time in the world—"

"Haste makes waste. Now I cherish a delusion that I can beat you—"

"No billiards," interrupted Tommy.

"Coward! Well, escort me as far as the portals of the sacred edifice."

Tommy left Rivington early and went home to dress for dinner. He found his father in the library reading the exasperating *Evening Post.*

Mr. Leigh looked up quickly. "Well, Thomas, did you have any luck to-day?"

Digitized by Google

"Colonel Willetts promised to take two hundred shares for Rivington and Marion. He was not what you'd call enthusiastic."

"I understand he never is," said Mr. Leigh, so peevishly that Tommy looked at him in surprise. "Did you tell him what the company had been making?"

"Oh yes! What he didn't like was that, no matter how well the company may do, under Mr. Thompson's new plans the stockholders won't get all the profits in dividends."

"Did you tell him that the present stockholders are willing to subscribe for all the new stock?"

"I told him the capital was provided for, but I had this chance to interest personal friends."

Mr. Leigh frowned angrily. Tommy, who had never before seen such a look on his father's face, said, soothingly:

"He took me at my word. Rivington and Marion are my best friends."

"Did you tell him that your company would be a dividend-payer when other concerns less far-seeing would be passing their dividends? Did you point out to him the trend of political thought in this country? Did you tell him that his own real-estate holdings in New York City, by reason of municipal extravagance, political maladministration, general inefficiency, and lack of co-opera-

Digitized by Google

tion among landlords, were not the safest investments? Did you tell him that Thompson realizes clearly the changed attitude of the entire world toward property rights and capital and toward the rights of the producing classes? Did you tell him that a man who is wise enough to be content with eight per cent. on his money now when he might get twenty per cent. is more likely to be getting the same eight per cent. when to-day's twenty-per-cent. payers will be writing off the loss of principal to-morrow? Did you?"

Mr. Leigh's vehemence and the accusing ring of his voice astonished Tommy.

"No, I didn't," he answered.

Mr. Leigh calmed down as suddenly as he had flared up.

"And you did not point out to him the absurdly low overhead charge and the remarkable relation of your gross sales to your capital, and the complete adequacy of the financial and mechanical machinery of the new company to meet all emergencies, good and bad alike?"

"Well, I thought the figures spoke for themselves."

"Thomas," said Mr. Leigh, sternly, "figures don't speak to the average man, and often not even to the expert. The man behind the figures —that's what counts."

Digitized by Google

An icy hand squeezed Tommy's heart. An expert at figures had paid for his education. The only figures that now came into his throbbing mind were: seventeen thousand dollars! And the man behind those figures was his own father!

"You must see Willetts again," said Mr. Leigh, quietly. "Perhaps I'd better explain the figures to him myself, Thomas."

"No!" cried Tommy, so peremptorily that he instantly felt compelled to soften the refusal. "I'd rather not, father. I'll see him again if he'll let me."

"He'll have to let you," said Mr. Leigh. He nodded to himself fully a dozen times, in the same curious way that to Tommy always seemed so unpleasantly senile. "Yes! Yes!"

"Rivington thinks"—and Tommy was conscious of a desire to soothe his father—"that the colonel will even help me to place the entire two thousand shares among friends."

"It is I who should help you, Thomas. Your mother would have insisted upon it." Mr. Leigh's lips were pressed together grimly, an expression that Tommy not only remembered, but associated poignantly with his own life's great tragedy. But he said, bravely:

"Father, I must work out my problems myself."

Mr. Leigh shook his head decidedly. "You are

Digitized by Google

not qualified to carry this to success unaided, Thomas. I am not wiser than you, my son, but older."

"Mr. Thompson foresaw my failure. He has provided for it. He said—"

"No, no!" interrupted Mr. Leigh, so excitedly that his voice rose shrilly. "You must not fail! You must not fail!"

"Mr. Thompson told me it would not hurt my prospects—"

"You must not fail!" repeated Mr. Leigh, doggedly. "It is my duty to help you. I am the best judge of your needs. I am your father."

Tommy was on the verge of denial. All that his father had come to mean to him, all that had gone before, all that the future meant to him, his doubts and his fears and his hopes—all had something to say to Tommy. And the confusion made him temporize.

"I appreciate how you feel, dad; but please don't do anything until I've tried some of my other friends, will you?"

"The sooner it is settled, the better," said Mr. Leigh, obstinately. "Thomas, bear in mind that you are not a business man. You don't understand that money is never to be had merely for the asking. Your problem is to get the money as quickly as possible."

Digitized by Google

Mr. Leigh was frowning, full of a feverish impatience that alarmed Tommy. To him his father had always been a slave of routine and method, almost an automaton. Evidently the old man's nerves were overwrought, and there was no telling the reason. But his desire to help his son was prompted by love and loyalty to the living and the dead. Tommy approached his father and threw an arm about the old shoulders.

"Dad," he spoke coaxingly, "you don't know what it means to me to do this thing alone. I want to try hard before I call for help. If I succeed alone, don't you see how I'll feel?"

The old man did not reply. Presently Tommy felt him draw in his breath; then Mr. Leigh nodded slowly.

"Very well, Thomas," he said, in his old voice, steady, emotionless, the voice a ledger would use if it could speak.

"Thanks, dad. I'll go and dress now. I'm dining at the Willetts'." And Tommy left his father.

Marion was as unfeignedly glad to see him as he was to see her, with this difference—that he did not know how he made her feel, but he knew she somehow made him feel like the Prodigal Son, only, of course, he was not down and out—quite the contrary. Through the dinner it was made plain to Tommy that he was one of the Willetts

Digitized by Google

family. At the end, as he did not smoke, he followed Marion into the library.

She assured herself that he had a comfortable chair by insisting upon his taking her own favorite, found another for herself, and then she said to him, eagerly:

"Tell me all about it!"

Tommy, who had spoken of nothing else at the table but his Dayton experiences, said, simply: "I am sorry I didn't send you the long letter I wrote you when I thought I was fired."

"No; you didn't keep your promise. I expected to hear all about it. I knew you'd much rather write to Rivington than to me; but I also thought"—she paused, and then looked him frankly in the eyes—"I thought you would be so lonely and homesick that you'd like to write to all your friends, to remind yourself that you had them. I suppose you were too busy?" She looked as if she expected him to agree with her. There was but one excuse, and she herself had given it to him and he accepted it.

"Of course, I had to hustle," he said; and then he blushed to think of the easy time he had in Dayton. Everybody expected him to be a slave, a sweat-shop worker, and pitied him accordingly. The reaction made him say, "I'll tell you the whole story, if you don't think it will bore you."

Digitized by Google

"You men are always fishing for excuses to do what you ought to be dying to do anyhow. Go on, and don't skip anything."

And Tommy gladly began the epic narrative of his Dayton life, barring only the secret. He told it not only honestly, but in detail. That she was as interested as he was plain, until he began to fear that he was making himself into a hero. But it was too late to alter the portrait, so to preserve his self-respect he began to tell her all about Thompson and Thompson's dreams and Thompson's plans.

"Tommy," she exclaimed, excitedly, "he is a wonderful man. I had no idea business was like that. And you are the luckiest boy in the world to work in such a place."

"Yes, and it was by a fluke that I landed the job."

"I don't care. It was the luckiest thing that ever happened, even if it took you away from home."

"I suppose it was, but let me tell you it was mighty tough at first." And he told her how he had fought homesickness, so that he actually believed it. And naturally she also believed him.

"You might have written," she reproached him.

"If you had read the letters I wanted to write but didn't, you would have had to put in eight

Digitized by Google

hours a day. It was considerate of me not to, don't you think?"

"But you promised you would."

"But I wasn't going to take an unfair advantage of your youth," he said, and looked at her with a benevolent smile. And then he wondered why he had not written every day. He could not understand it now.

"Of course," he assured her, "now that you are going to be one of our stockholders I'll have to send you reports of the work quite often." He saw himself doing it. She would know everything.

"What do you mean, Tommy?" she asked, excitedly.

He told her how her father had promised to take one hundred shares for her and one hundred for Rivington. And then he told her he still had eighteen hundred shares to sell. Why shouldn't he tell her everything?

"To whom are you going to sell the rest?"

"I'm going to try to sell them to friends who will be interested in Mr. Thompson's experiments with men as well as in the money-making end. It will be very hard. You see, Marion, our company is going to do business in a new way. Of course, here in the East, people don't realize what corporations will have to do hereafter if they expect to stay in business."

Digitized by Google

This sounded very wise and business-like to both of them. Marion paid him the additional compliment of regarding him as a Westerner. He could tell by the way she looked when she said:

"And what will your work be?"

So he told her what he so far had kept a secret from her—what Thompson expected to make of the Tecumseh men through the aid of Thomas Francis Leigh. He really told it very well, because he kept nothing from her, and in so doing made his hopes realities.

"Tommy, that is perfectly wonderful! I am so glad for your sake! And you can do it, too! I can see how you feel about it, and you are bound to win. And won't you feel glad—"

Colonel Willetts and Rivington walked in. Rivington winked at Tommy—old signal 18—to show he had been pleading his friend's cause at court. Marion said to her father:

"Tommy was just telling me about Dayton and his company. You must help him to sell that stock, papa."

Colonel Willetts worshiped her. He turned to Tommy: "Unfair weapons to use on a man in the man's own house, young man. Is that the Western way?"

"The Western way is the best," said Marion,

Digitized by Google

positively. She rose and confronted her father. "Are you going to help Tommy? Yes or no."

Tommy felt uncomfortable.

"Look here, sir—" he began, apologetically.

"Of course I'll help Tommy," said Colonel Willetts. "He's coming to the office." And he turned the subject.

Marion looked proudly at Tommy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX

AT the breakfast table the next morning neither Tommy nor Mr. Leigh made any allusion to the stock-selling campaign. But as his father was leaving Tommy told him:

"Colonel Willetts said last night he would help me place the stock. I'm to call at his office again."

"Do so by all means, Thomas," said Mr. Leigh, with an almost cold formality. "Be sure you make the points I explained to you yesterday, particularly the probable permanency of dividends under a far-sighted policy, and the equally certain depreciation of both principal and income from real-estate holdings in New York City. A political or even a social revolution will hurt such a business as Mr. Thompson has planned far less than it will real estate, which not only cannot be hidden or moved, but has innumerable natural enemies, such as the shifting centers of trade and fashion and inefficient or corrupt municipal government. You might tell him that under certain circumstances all land partakes of the quality of

Digitized by Google

mud, and the wisest of men can get stuck in the mud."

Tommy gasped. The man he had known as his father had spoken like this. Mr. Leigh went on judicially:

"Ask him whether his gains from the unearned increment as well as from increases in values in certain sections have fully offset his losses from the decline of what he considered choice property ten or fifteen years ago. Ask him whether he thinks the big financial institutions, like the life-insurance companies, are comfortable over their ownership of properties they have had to take over to protect their own gilt-edge first mortgages. Real estate is a tradition of his family, and you must make him think of the future. Good morning, Thomas."

His father was more of a business man than Tommy had ever dreamed. His advice was sound. But—

A theory came to Tommy ready-made, from the birthplace of all explanations. Obviously long years of brooding on his dead wife and on what he had done to keep his promise to her had made Mr. Leigh morbid. He had remained a book-keeper because the only way in which he could continue to avert discovery was by remaining where he could conceal his deeds. It made the

Digitized by Google

repayment of the seventeen thousand dollars more than ever urgent. Where could Tommy borrow it, since it was out of the question to think of earning so vast a sum in a short time? He must consult Mr. Thompson. If he could not confide fully, he might at least put a hypothetical question, give hints, sound Mr. Thompson somehow. But before he could speak to Thompson he must sell the stock.

He was to lunch at the college club with Rivington. He doubtless would meet friends there who might take a few hundred shares. The dollars that Tommy had to raise suddenly became so heavy that Tommy despaired.

At the club he was lucky enough to meet Red Mead, whose father was a capitalist and—so Red said—had been very successful in finding highly profitable investments in all sorts of manufacturing enterprises. Red told Tommy he was sure the old gentleman would fall for a hundred thousand bucks, provided the talk was sufficiently convincing to justify Mr. Mead in sending an expert to look over the property. Whereat Tommy promised to call on Mr. Mead, though he was almost certain Red's father was the kind that wanted big dividends. And Bull Wilson told him that only the day before his father was regretting not having taken a block of Bishop-Wolf automo-

Digitized by Google

bile stock that was offered to him for thirty-five thousand dollars three years before and was now worth a million.

"He's your meat, Tommy. He's gone to Washington with his patent lawyer. When he comes back I'll tell him that I've asked you to do me the favor to call on him before you see any one else."

Tommy did not permit himself to feel encouraged by these promises; nevertheless, he decided not to see Colonel Willetts until after he had tried elsewhere. But Rivington insisted upon going to his father's office that very afternoon.

"They are always after him. Every time he invests in a new thing or puts up another building he talks poverty for a month. You just chase yourself down-town right away."

Rivington's obvious eagerness to see Tommy succeed had the effect of making Tommy feel that, after all, his friends were in New York. The work lay in Dayton, but his happiness in New York. For a moment, as he held Rivington's hand, Tommy felt that his stay in Dayton thereafter must be tinged by the regret that he could not see his best friend every day. But the work was too important. If only Rivington would move to Dayton! Of course if Rivington was there Marion would visit him frequently. What a place Dayton would be evenings!

Digitized by Google

In the Subway on his way to Colonel Willetts's office Tommy's mood left him. The New York he saw about him, with its alien faces—all kinds of faces and all alien—was not the place for him to work in. And his own particular New York was very small—a city with a score of inhabitants. His real life could never merge with the life of the strange and dislikable New York he saw in the streets and in the shops and in the office buildings. He could not work here, where every man was concerned with himself and no one else, and so plainly showed it in his face. New York could never be a city of brothers, of men who wished both to be helped and to help. He would go back to Dayton, of course. And he must take back checks for a total of two hundred thousand dollars. He must! And he would!

He paused a moment in the hallway of the sixth floor of the Willetts Building, one of Wall Street's earliest skyscrapers, and considered a moment how he should proceed. He was about to grasp the knob of the door of Colonel Willetts's office when the door opened and Mr. Leigh came out.

"Father!" cried Tommy. His plans, not very elaborate, were knocked into a cocked hat. Misery, indefinite but poignant, filled him.

"Thomas!" gasped Mr. Leigh. He was more

Digitized by Google

startled than his son. To Tommy his father's look was one of guilt. And a guilty look on that face was like turning the calcium-light on the secret.

"I—I had to see Colonel Willetts on bank business," stammered Mr. Leigh. He glanced at Tommy uncomfortably and quickly looked away. Then he said, apologetically, almost pleadingly: "I thought it expedient, while I was there, to speak about your errand to New York. I—I gave him my opinion of the—investment."

"But I asked you— I hoped you would not speak about it," said Tommy, unhappy rather than annoyed. And then, with the illogicality of sorrow, Tommy thought that his father knew so little about the company that any advice he might give about the investment could not be strictly honest advice.

"Colonel Willetts is a director of the Marshall National, and our bank has close relations with it. I have done no harm to you, Thomas."

Tommy was frowning because of his own disinclination to recognize ungrudgingly that his father had been prompted by loyalty and love. Old people were like that. And now his father was actually and visibly afraid of incurring the displeasure of the son for whom he had done so much—too much! And that son actually was

Digitized by Google

thinking of his own grievances! Moreover, the damage, if any, was done.

"You meant for the best, dad!" said Tommy, with a smile, and held out his hand. "I expect you will have to wait till I grow up before I get some sense."

His father's hand clutched his so tightly that Tommy's resentment turned into remorse.

"I'll make the points you told me last night, dad. They are mighty good points!" And he meant it.

"Good luck, Thomas," said the old man, more composedly, and walked away. Tommy looked after him, and for the first time in his life realized that Mr. Leigh's shoulders were inclined to stoop. Years and years of bending over his ledger had left on him the mark of the modern galley slave. Tommy's dislike of bookkeeping rose on the spot to a positive hatred. Also, the stoop showed the weight of a burden heavy beyond words!

He decided that the moment the money was paid back he would ask his father to move to Dayton, far away from the bank, and live with his only son, who by that time should be able to support both.

"He will never leave the old house," decided Tommy next. It meant so much to him: the house where Tommy's mother had lived, where

Digitized by Google

Tommy was born, where she died. The sentiment and also the wing-clipping habit of a lifetime made sudden changes dangerous to old age.

"A hell of a world!" came next.

Well, work that a man could take an interest in was invented so that a man need not care whether or not it was a hell of a world.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX

HE walked into Colonel Willetts's office with a pugnacious consciousness of being twenty years older than on the day before. He would talk business in a business-like way. He was prepared to fight, to overcome opposition, to convince the colonel against the colonel's will.

"Hello, Tommy!" called out Colonel Willetts, cheerily. He was standing beside the stock ticker. "Have a seat, my boy."

Tommy was glad at the welcome, but also subtly disappointed. It is easier to fight a fighter than to fight an amiable friend.

"Good afternoon, Colonel. I came to—"

"Just wait a minute until I see the closing price of my latest mistake, won't you?" He ran the tape through his fingers. "Not so bad! A kind Providence may yet save me. Now what can I do for you?"

"Providence has heard your prayers, Colonel. I came to show you that your plain duty is to become a stockholder of the Tecumseh Motor Company with the rest of your family."

Digitized by Google

"They tell me the younger the shark the more voracious it is."

"Colonel," said Tommy, earnestly, because the colonel was not taking Tommy's mission very seriously, "ten years from to-day, when New York real estate—"

"Hold on. I know disaster is approaching this fair metropolis and skipping Dayton." The colonel held up his hands. "I succumb!"

"The entire two thousand shares, Colonel, of course," said Tommy, prepared to compromise.

"Sit down, young man."

Tommy sat down and looked expectant.

Colonel Willetts pursued, seriously: "I've looked over your papers again. You vouch for their accuracy?" The colonel had put on his martial air and managed to look not only stern but cold.

"Yes, sir, I do!" answered Tommy, firmly.

"You are sure of your figures?"

"Absolutely. But I'd like to call your attention to the fact that the company's plans have for an object not only to solve certain problems among our wage-earners, but also to insure the permanency of our dividends on a basis of eight per cent. per annum. There may be extra dividends, but we won't promise more than—"

"It is an iron-clad rule of mine never to have business dealings with personal friends. I prefer

Digitized by Google

to make a gift of the amount than to regard it as an investment." The colonel was frowning quite fiercely.

Tommy's heart leaped, for Colonel Willetts was a very rich man indeed. But he said, "A gift is, of course, out of the question."

"That is why I have to break my rule two or three times a year. You wish friends to be interested in your Mr. Thompson's experiments. I don't blame you. No, I don't! But they might prove rather expensive. Yes, yes, I know you think they will be successful. Rivington telephoned to me that you were going to see Mead and Jim Wilson, and a few other unfortunate fathers of chums, but I'll save you the trouble. I shall make them think the experiment worth trying and we'll take a sporting chance. You owe it to us to warn us in time if things don't go right."

Tommy hesitated. Loyalty was due to whom? Then his doubts cleared. Thompson, the wizard, wanted him to work for both the men and the stockholders! That would keep Tommy from doing injustice to either. That was Thompson's reason undoubtedly.

"I shall watch your interests as if they were mine—no, I'll watch more carefully." Tommy spoke with decision.

"I have inquired about your company's stand-

Digitized by Google

ing. I find its rating high. Your father—" The colonel caught himself abruptly.

"Yes, sir?" Tommy's lips came together while Willetts walked to his desk and went through the motions of looking for some papers.

Then the colonel pursued: "Your father told me what you had been doing. He evidently thinks as much of Thompson as you do. And he gave me some confidential reports from the Metropolitan Bank's correspondents in Dayton. I—I guess the money is safe enough." He looked at Tommy a trifle dubiously, but before Tommy could reassure him he went on, lightly, "And Marion wants me to send Rivington out there to have a miracle performed on him."

"I wish he'd come," said Tommy, eagerly.

"I don't!" said the colonel, shortly. "He is no black sheep in need of reform and—I don't mean to insinuate that you are, Tommy; but Rivington is all the son I've got, and I need him here, where his business interests will be. I expect him to come into the office next year. There's plenty of time."

The colonel nodded to show that he knew what he was doing. He loved his son, and at times was really grateful that Rivington had no alarming fondness for disreputable things. Rivington was a gentleman and would behave accordingly.

Digitized by Google

He was a Willetts and, therefore, must concern himself with conserving his inheritance. It did not occur to the colonel that Rivington might live decently all his life and withal be a non-producer. If any one had said that to the colonel, doubtless the colonel would have said that Rivington did not need to be a producer. Tommy was faintly conscious that if Rivington worked under Thompson for a few years he would greatly increase his own usefulness, but he merely said:

"I can't help wishing that Rivington and I might be together, Colonel."

"I understand, my boy," agreed the colonel, rather too hastily, Tommy thought. "Well, I'll take the two thousand shares. Have the stock put in the name of John B. Kendrick, my confidential clerk, who will give you a check for the two hundred thousand dollars. I'll apportion the stock later. I am too busy just now, and I know you are anxious to return to Dayton."

Tommy's joy over his success was a complex affair. He had a boy's immaturity, but he could think straight enough. His father had done the obvious thing in having the bank's correspondents telegraph confidential reports about the Tecumseh's standing and reputation to New York business men, who would attach greater importance to such information than to Tommy's reports

Digitized by Google

about Thompson, who really was the Tecumseh. Moreover, it was friendship and not eloquence or hard work that had persuaded Colonel Willetts to buy the stock. Thus there could be no sense of personal triumph. At all events, the deal was closed, his work was done, and Thompson's wish would be gratified, and Tommy would do his best to make it a safe investment for Colonel Willetts and his friends.

"I am much obliged, Colonel," he said, trying to speak with the proper composure.

"Not to me, Tommy; to—er—Marion. Gad! how that girl boomed Dayton." The colonel looked quickly at Tommy.

Everything else vanished from Tommy's mind, even the great work! He would tell her— But first he must say something to her father.

"I hope she—and you—will never be sorry you've done this. It means a lot to me and—"

"What commission do you get, Tommy?" asked the colonel, quizzically.

"None," answered Tommy, quickly.

"Nonsense! You are entitled to at least two and a half per cent. and more—"

"It was a personal favor to me," said Tommy, "because Mr. Thompson thought I could work better knowing I had interested friends in the company."

Digitized by Google

The colonel rose to his feet. "Mr. Leigh, I have a favor to ask of you. If you think I am entitled to your protection and good wishes—" He paused and looked questioningly at Tommy.

"You are," said the puzzled Tommy, quite earnestly.

"Then keep that damned man Thompson out of New York. Gad! he'd have us paying him for breathing. Now if you don't mind I'll write some letters and sign your check. You can have it certified if you wish."

The colonel rang a bell. Mr. Kendrick appeared. He was a tall, well-built man, neatly dressed in black.

"Kendrick, this is Mr. Thomas Leigh. Make out a check for two hundred thousand dollars, payable to the Tecumseh Motor Company, and write a letter to— Got a middle name, Tommy?"

"Yes, sir—Francis."

"To Mr. Thomas Francis Leigh, instructing him to have the two thousand shares of Tecumseh Motor Company which he has sold to me put in your name. I shall give instructions as to their disposition later. Good-by, Tommy. Confine your future visits to my residence. You are an expensive luxury down-town, son." And Colonel Willetts shook hands warmly.

Digitized by Google

"Is he always like that?" Tommy asked Kendrick in the outer office.

"Always—when he buys something of which he is doubtful, to make himself think it will come out all right," answered Kendrick, unsmilingly, and proceeded to make out a check for the two hundred thousand dollars as though it were for two hundred. A wonderful thing, this game of being rich, thought Tommy, to whom riches suddenly meant the slaying of a secret and the ability to make others happy.

Kendrick took the check in to the colonel for his signature, returned with it, sat down at a typewriter, and himself wrote the letter to Tommy, read it carefully, put the carbon copy of it away in a file marked "T," signed the original with the colonel's name, "per J. B. K.," and gave Tommy the letter with the check attached to it with a wire clip.

"Thank you," said Tommy, very calmly. Two hundred thousand dollars!

"One moment, please. Will you kindly sign this receipt?"

Tommy kindly did so. Kendrick took it from him silently.

"Er—good afternoon?" said Tommy, who really wished to say a great deal more.

"Good afternoon!" said Kendrick, who did not.

Digitized by Google

"No man for the Tecumseh," thought Tommy, as he walked out of the office—a successful man.

The colonel had spoken about getting the check certified. Tommy did not quite know how to go about it, but his father could tell him.

From the Willetts Building Tommy walked to his father's bank.

At the imposing entrance Tommy halted. He had never been inside. He looked at the huge gray building with an interest that was almost uncomfortable. People were straggling out. Nobody was going in. He saw by the clock on Trinity's steeple that it was after banking hours. He assumed that if he saw his father there would be no trouble in transacting his business, notwithstanding the hour.

He started toward the main entrance and suddenly halted in his tracks. He could not go in. Within that building worked his father, an old and trusted employee of the bank, who had educated his son too expensively for an old and trusted bank employee.

It was the birthplace of the secret!

Suddenly the huge gray building took on an accusing aspect, cold, menacing. The massive granite columns became sentinels on guard. He owed that building seventeen thousand dollars, and the granite columns knew it!

Digitized by Google

"I'll see him at home to-night!" decided Tommy.

His heart was beating at such a furious rate that he forgot about his success. The check for two hundred thousand dollars was merely a bit of waste paper. The vision of his work vanished utterly into a future that ceased to exist. The present was before him. What would Colonel Willetts say when he learned what his father had done, year after year! And what would the bank say? And what would everybody say to the beneficiary of that deed, innocent but none the less the sole beneficiary?

He thought of Dayton, his only refuge, his goal. He hurried away, his mind bent on reaching Dayton as quickly as possible. There he would be among friends, among people who knew that he was penniless and willing to work and expiate another's error, among friends who knew only the Tommy Leigh he must be to the end of his life.

He walked on quickly, impelled by an irresistible desire to keep on walking until he arrived at Thompson's private office. Once more that overwhelming sense of solitude came upon him that he had felt when he alighted from the train in Dayton. Again he was alone in a strange and unfriendly place, alone in the world.

There was nobody in New York to whom he

Digitized by Google

could talk. In Dayton there was no reason why he should not tell everything to Mr. Thompson or to Bill Byrnes or even to Mr. Grosvenor. They would stand by him after they knew. They were men who would be loyal to him. Therefore, he must be loyal to them, to the men who would ask him to do his work, knowing he was not to blame. The best men in the world these, his good friends, who alone of all men would understand how a man might do for love what his father had done. And here in New York where his father lived nobody would understand! There were no friends.

Out of bitterness came the recollection of Colonel Willetts's friendly words and generous help. But he could not be altogether grateful, for, if the secret were known, would Colonel Willetts be the same?

He did not know. But he did know it would not make any difference to Rivington. Certainly not, God bless him! And yet he could not tell Rivington, whom he loved as a brother. He dared not. And he could not tell Marion. She would not blame him. She would feel very sorry for him. She would say, softly, "Poor Tommy!" He saw her lips move as she said this. He saw her eyes, moist and luminous. He was sure of her—absolutely!

He drew in a deep breath. With the oxygen

Digitized by Google

came courage. His fists clenched as the fighting mood returned. He would win out. Had he forgotten for a moment that he must fight until he had killed this thing that made his life a torture? He must not stop fighting a single second until he won out. And when that happened—

He saw Marion again. He heard her. She said, "Good boy, Tommy!"

Some one else said, "Hey, there, why don't you look where yer goin', you big slob?"

It was a newsboy into whom he had bumped.

"Excuse me," said Tommy, contritely.

"Aw, fergit it!" retorted the boy.

"I will!" said Tommy, thinking of something else. He would forget it!

He walked into the nearest telephone pay station and called up Marion. He was just in time. She was just about to leave the house to do some shopping, she told him.

"I was coming up to say good-by," he said. "Can't we have tea somewhere? I'll get Rivington. I think he's at the club."

"When are you going?"

"To-night at eight-thirty."

"Must you? I thought you'd stay—"

"Must!" he said, miserably but proudly.

"I'm so sorry. Well, I'll meet you at Sherry's at five."

Digitized by Google

"Don't forget," he said.

"I won't keep you waiting," she assured him.

He left the telephone-booth smiling, master of himself. His youth made his sense of relative values imperfect. That made him harrow his own feelings with the utmost ease, and also made him cease the self-torture with equal facility.

He rode up-town, thinking quite comfortably of his departure from New York and of his arrival in Dayton, and succeeded in strengthening his own resolve to put an end to the secret somehow.

He arrived at his college club. Luck was with him. Rivington, having been a steady loser, was still playing billiards.

"Hello, Tommy, how did you make out?"

"Complete success!"

"Great-oh!" And Rivington made a miscue.

"Great-oh!" echoed Rivington's opponent. "Thank you, Tommily."

Rivington approached Tommy and shook hands warmly. "Did he take the whole cheese?"

"Yes. He's a brick! And, say, we are to meet Marion at five at Sherry's."

"What for?"

"I'm going back to Dayton to-night."

"Are you crazy?" exclaimed Rivington, stepping back in alarm.

Digitized by Google

"I work for a living, lad," said Tommy, paternally.

"Well, you'd better give it up before it is too late. Why, Tommy, I had planned a series of professional visits— Ha, that ends the succession of scratches, James." And he left Tommy for the billiard-table.

Tommy looked at him, at Jim Rogers, at the other fellow-alumni about the other tables. A pleasant enough life, mild, wholesome amusements for decent chaps, who enjoyed one another's company—and didn't work. No life for him!

He recalled the oily odors of the shop. They made him almost homesick! No life for him, this!

"Remember," he called to Rivington, "I'll come back for you in thirty-two minutes."

"It would be a kindness to take him out now, Tommily," remarked Jim Rogers.

Nice children, these, thought old Mr. Thomas F. Leigh as he left the billiard-room.

Rivington's luck had turned when Tommy called for him; but he only grumbled a little as they left the club. He was very fond of his sister; and then there was his loyalty toward an unfortunate friend whose fortunes he had shared at college.

They found a table in a corner—selected by Tommy as far from the madding crowd as he

Digitized by Google

could get it—and while they waited for Marion, who had promised not to keep them waiting, Tommy told Rivington all about his deal with Colonel Willetts. Rivington did not appear interested enough in the investment to suit Tommy, so young Mr. Leigh explained sternly what Thompson meant to do, and told him what manner of man Thompson was and all about the experiments, and why all the stockholders must be interested in the work and the experiments, until Rivington became quite excited.

"Say, that's some man, Tommy!"

Tommy smiled tolerantly and nodded.

"Don't be so confoundedly superior," cried Rivington. "You needn't think you can make me believe that your experimental boss has put a new brain in your coco."

"No, the old brain was all right."

"What?" almost shrieked Rivington.

"I'll tell you what he has done, though," said Tommy, seriously. "He has given me new eyes to see with."

"When they begin to think they see things," said Rivington, solemnly, "it's a sign a mighty intellect is tottering." Then Rivington, seeing that Tommy was still serious, became serious in turn. "Tom, that's what I've always said. If they'd only make the work interesting they'd

Digitized by Google

make you think business was your pet elective and unappreciated geniuses would gladly put in ten hours a day. But what do they give you instead? A last year's advertisement of a special sale of cod-liver oil, and you trying to work off four inches of waist-line. I am going to tell my honored father to take a tip from Thompson. There's Marion!" And he rose to his feet that she might see him.

She came toward them, smiling. "How do you do, Tommy?" She shook hands man fashion, grasping Tommy's hand firmly and looking straight into his eyes.

The sight of her filled Tommy with pleasure. Her presence made itself felt to him also in exquisitely subtle ways. It brought to him a wonderful sense of companionship, that provided him with a receptacle whereinto he might pour out torrentially whatever it was that his soul craved to give forth. And he was leaving all these things to undertake the work in Dayton which had seemed so important to him! He wondered whether he would be satisfied to live in New York if things were different—a life like Rivington's, for instance? And he was instantly conscious that he was older and wiser than Rivington.

But even if he could—and he wasn't sure he could—he really couldn't. And the reason he

Digitized by Google

could not was a reason that Marion must never know. But he had to tell her something.

"I didn't think it would come so hard to return to Dayton," he said. But it was the thought of what he could not tell her that made his voice serious.

"It's too bad!" said Marion. She looked so sympathetic that Tommy's self-pity was at once aroused.

"Yes, it is," he said, and looked at her.

She looked away. Rivington was trying to catch the headwaiter's eye. Tommy was silent. Marion was forced to speak.

"Are you going to write this time?" Her eyebrows were raised, calmly questioning. The calmness brought to her a sense of both age and safety.

"How often can you stand it?" asked Tommy, anxiously. He wished to write every day.

"How often will you feel like it?" she asked, it was plain to see, for information only, that she might tell him exactly.

"If I wrote as often as I felt like it I'd write—" He stopped.

"That's what you say now." Then she smiled, to forgive his silence in advance.

"Marion, I can't tell you how grateful I am to you—er—your father. He's made me go back a winner. It means everything to me."

Digitized by Google

"I'm so glad, Tommy. Isn't it fine?"

"Yes. Only I wish I didn't have to go back at all."

She forgot that she had told him the night before that he was the luckiest boy in the world to have a chance to do such splendid work as Mr. Thompson had mapped out for him. She asked, anxiously:

"Do you have to, Tommy?"

"Yes," he answered, gloomily.

"I mean to-day?"

She looked at him. It thrilled him so that he instantly reacted to a sense of duty.

"Yes," he said, grimly; "I must. I—" He caught himself.

"You what?"

"I'll tell you some day." He spoke almost threateningly.

"Why can't you—" she began, irrepressibly.

He shook his head so firmly and withal miserably that she looked away and said:

"Don't forget to write." She turned to him and smiled. She knew this boy would remain a boy for years. He divined her suspicion. In fact, he did so quite easily. It made him say:

"I don't think you really know me, Marion." He forgot himself and looked at her challengingly.

Digitized by Google

She took up his challenge. How could she help it? She retorted, "As well as you know me!"

"I wonder if that can be so?" he mused. He looked into her eyes intently to see if peradventure the truth was there.

"Do you think people can read each other's thoughts?" she asked, a trifle anxiously.

"Sometimes I do—almost," said Tommy, in a low voice.

"Tea and English muffins toasted," said Rivington to the waiter. To Tommy he remarked: "Since I began to associate with wage-earners I find tea helpful. Also sinkers. The days of beer and pretzels—"

"There isn't a souse in the shop," interrupted Tommy, with great dignity. "It was one of the things that Thompson did, and the men never knew it until it was done." And since he sadly realized that his tête-à-tête with Marion was over, he began to tell them about his job at the shop, to which he was Door Opener. Marion listened for the second time with the same degree and quality of interest with which she would have listened to an African hunting story or a narrative of incredible hardship in the Arctic. And so did Rivington. And then Tommy told them about Bill's invention and hinted at his own hopes. Not being fully satisfied with the hints, he proceeded elaborately

Digitized by Google

to make plain to them what the first successful kerosene carburetor would do for the automobile industry and what it ought to mean to the owners of the patent. And Marion's eyes thereat grew gloriously bright with excitement.

"Won't it be fine when your friend finishes it?" she said.

"Yes, it will," said Tommy, looking steadily into her eyes.

"No, it would make a philanthropist of Tommy," said Rivington, shaking his head, "and then his friends would lose him. Leave him as he is—a poor thing, but our own."

Youthful vaudeville, thought Tommy, but not altogether displeasing. And later, when he said good-by to Marion, he was overwhelmed by the infinitude of the things he had wished to tell her and had not.

"Be sure to write," she said.

"Yes," interjected Rivington, "we expect daily reports of profits. No more loafing on the job. Your stockholders have rights which even you are bound to respect, my piratical friend. But I think you are a ninny just the same."

"I've got to go back to-night," said Tommy, craving sympathy.

"Yes, the plant might burn down or the horny-handed might get to cutting up. Ah, I see! You

Digitized by Google

are docked the full twenty cents a day during your absence."

But Tommy was busy manœuvering so that he might say to Marion desperately the least of the million things he wished to say. He told her in a low voice:

"You are the most wonderful girl in the world."

She shook her head and smiled.

"Yes!" he insisted, with a frown.

"I'm glad you think so," she said, seriously.

"Are you?"

"Yes," she said. Then she nodded twice.

"Good-by!" He shook hands, unaware that he was pressing hers too tightly for comfort.

"Good-by and—good luck!" she said, earnestly.

"That means getting back to New York," said Rivington. "Why don't you try for the selling agency here, you idiot?"

"No," said Tommy, frowning as he thought of the new reason, "it means my making good in Dayton."

And from Sherry's he went straight to the station and bought his railroad ticket for Dayton. He would leave that same night.

From the ticket-office he went home to pack. His father was in the library reading his newspaper. The little parlor on the first floor was a much more comfortable room, but Mr. Leigh

Digitized by Google

religiously did all his reading in the library by the table whereon were the family Bible, the ivory paper-cutter, and the fading photograph of his wife in its silver frame.

The old man nodded gravely as Tommy entered. "Were you more successful to-day, Thomas?" he asked, calmly.

"Yes, dad. Colonel Willetts took the entire block. He was very nice about it. I—suppose I have to thank you for it."

"You don't have to thank me; thank your friend, Mr. Thompson. It is a good business proposition." Mr. Leigh nodded, as if his own statement needed his confirmation. At least that is the way it impressed Tommy.

"I'm going back to-night, father, and—"

"So soon?" interrupted Mr. Leigh, quickly. The look of alarm that came into his eyes vanished before Tommy could see it.

"Yes, sir. By the way, I have Colonel Willetts's check. He told me I might get it certified at the bank, but I—I didn't." Tommy distinctly remembered why he had not entered the bank. But all he said was, "It was after banking hours."

"If you wish I can have it done and mail it to you."

"I'd like to take it back with me," said Tommy; "but I suppose I can't."

Digitized by Google

"It isn't necessary to have it certified. The bank will surely pay it. You would like to take it with you and give it to Thompson yourself?" The old man's hands, unseen by Tommy, clenched tightly.

"Of course I would," laughed Tommy, who naturally had dramatized his own triumphant return to Dayton.

"There is no reason why you shouldn't, Thomas," said Mr. Leigh. Then after a pause, "Particularly if you must return at once."

"Yes, I must," said Tommy. By rights he ought to stay in New York and live with his father, whose only son he was, the father with whom he had lived so little since his school days. Then he assured himself that Marion had nothing to do with his sense of filial duty.

For a moment Mr. Leigh looked as if he were about to speak, but he merely shook his head and resumed his newspaper. Tommy went to his room to pack his suit-case. They had very little to say at dinner. When the time came for parting, Mr. Leigh's face took on the same look of grim determination that Tommy remembered so distressingly.

"My son," said Mr. Leigh, in the dispirited monotone that also recalled to Tommy the first time he had heard it, "I do not think you—you

Digitized by Google

are called upon to suffer unnecessary discomforts. Your—your weekly remittances to me are doubtless depriving you of—"

"They are my chief pleasure, dad," Tommy interrupted, very kindly. "I send only what I can afford. I am very comfortable. I never felt more fit. And I— Well, father, you might as well understand that I've simply got to pay back the money you—you spent for my education."

"There is no call upon you to do that. It was my duty. Your education was to me the most important—"

"Yes, yes, I understand, dad. But don't you understand how I feel about it?" Tommy spoke feverishly. He hated to talk about it, for it sharpened the secret's prod unbearably. And he hated himself for his cowardice in not talking about it in plain words.

"I have credited you with what you've sent," said Mr. Leigh, so eagerly, so apologetically, and withal so proudly, that Tommy's heart was softened. "See?" And the old man took from the table drawer the little book bound in black morocco and showed Tommy the items on the credit side.

"Not as much as I'd like," said Tommy, bravely trying to speak pleasantly.

"But I don't want you to stint yourself. It

Digitized by Google

isn't necessary." Seeing Tommy's look of protest, he went on, hurriedly: "I can bear my burden alone. You are in no way to blame."

"Father, all I want to do is to pay back what I owe—"

"You owe nothing!"

"I think I do. It has made me work—"

"I don't want that. You must find pleasure in the work itself, not in paying my—er—debts, Thomas."

"Your debts are my debts," said Tommy, firmly. "And I do love the work. I want to do it. If I—even if I didn't feel I owed a penny, I'd still want to work in Dayton under Thompson, who will surely make me into a man."

"I think you are that already, Thomas." Mr. Leigh's voice quavered so that Tommy took a step toward him. "If you continue as you have begun"—Mr. Leigh's voice was now steady, almost cold—"I shall be quite satisfied, Thomas."

"I'll do my best, father," said Tommy, fully as firmly. "I'll write you regularly and keep you informed of my progress. My work is of a peculiar character, and I can't always be sure I'm making good. As a matter of fact," he added, in a burst of frankness, "I'm merely getting paid for being one of Thompson's Experiments, as they call us at the works."

Digitized by Google

"He is an unusual man. If his experiments should prove successful—" The old man paused to look sternly at his only son.

"He says they always do," smiled Tommy, reassuringly.

"I pray so, my son," said Mr. Leigh, quietly.

"Th' aut'mobile is out there," announced Maggie.

"Good-by, dad!" said Tommy, rising hastily.

Mr. Leigh also rose. He was frowning. His lips were pressed together tightly. He held out his hand. It was very cold. Tommy shook it warmly.

"Good-by, my son," said Mr. Leigh, sternly.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXI

LONG before his train arrived in Dayton Tommy firmly fixed his resolve. All that he had so far done at the Tecumseh was piffling; the real work was before him. His first definite, concrete task—his mission to New York—had been accomplished, but he saw very clearly that his success did not entitle him to much credit. It was not business ability or good salesmanship that had placed the stock, but sheer luck—the luck of having for his best friend Rivington Willetts, whose father happened to be an extremely rich man. But even with that luck he would have failed but for his father's forethought in supplying the information that intelligent investors required. He was conscious of a regret that he had not tried to interest Mr. Mead or Mr. Wilson, or some of the others in his list, to establish definitely whether or not he was a financier.

He could not help the intrusion into his meditations of one disturbing thought. His father worried him. The poor old man certainly had acted

Digitized by Google

queerly. It was quite obvious that long brooding over the secret had affected his father's mind. This made the situation more serious. Every day it grew more complicated, more menacing, more desirable to end it once for all. And yet Tommy could not make up his mind to confide in Thompson. Somehow the problem was not up squarely for solution. The need to ask Mr. Thompson's aid seemed less and less urgent as the train drew nearer and nearer to Dayton, exactly as a toothache, after raging all night, vanishes in the dentist's office at the first glimpse of the forceps. This thought made Tommy reproach himself for rank cowardice. But the excuse-seeking instinct of inexperienced youth made him instantly see his father as a loving father, who had done for his only son what his only son was so sorry he had done. And that love made it impossible not to shield him. It was not alone Tommy's secret, but his father's—theirs jointly.

It was not cowardice that decided Tommy. Nevertheless, he must be a man. Therefore, Tommy's problem changed itself into the simple proposition of working hard and doing his best. Then, whatever came, he would take it like a man. He forgot that he had already decided to do so several times. And so, toward the end, he became very impatient to reach the Tecumseh

Digitized by Google

shop, where the work was that must be his salvation.

He went straight to the office and, learning that Mr. Thompson was there, walked into the private office—without knocking, of course.

"Hello, Tommy! I thought you were in New York," said Thompson. He did not offer to shake hands, but that merely made Tommy feel that he really had not been away from Dayton at all. It, therefore, pushed New York at least five thousand miles eastward.

"Well, I got the check," began Tommy, very calmly, as though it were nothing unusual.

But Thompson did not smile at the boyish pose. He asked, quickly, "Not checks?" and emphasized the plural.

"The stock will be apportioned later," explained Tommy, hastily, realizing that Thompson had intended him to interest several people. "They are all friends, sir."

"Tell me all about it," said Thompson. And Tommy did. In order not to have to explain at all what he could not explain in full, he did not mention his father's participation.

"Well, Tommy," Mr. Thompson spoke musingly, "you are a lucky boy. Guard against it. Try to feel that you must earn your successes, even if you don't have to work as hard as other

Digitized by Google

men. Otherwise, they will mean nothing to you. And now what do you propose to do?'

"Get a receipt for the money. The stock is to be made out to John B. Kendrick."

"Go to Holland and tell him what you want done. If you have no other plans—" He looked inquiringly at Tommy.

"No, sir," hastily said Tommy.

"Your job is still Door Opener."

"Very well, sir." Tommy turned to go, but Thompson called to him.

"Tommy!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I'm glad to see you back." And Thompson held out his hand. Tommy shook it. He had received neither praise nor congratulations, but he knew now that this was the place for him.

"If you can, after you're done with Holland, come back here and I'll show you some architectural drawings that have just come in, of the new shop."

"I'll hurry back," said Tommy, happily.

He hastened down-town to the Tecumseh Building, saw Bob Holland, the treasurer of the company, gave him the check, got his receipt, told him to make out the stock certificates to John B. Kendrick, and received the promise that the certificates would go to New York within an hour.

Digitized by Google

Thompson was busy with some visitors when Tommy returned to the office, and Tommy gladly took advantage of the opportunity to walk round the shop, delighted to see the friends of whom he had forgotten to think in New York, but who, nevertheless, were so glad to see him. This was the place in life, where he could be the new Tommy Leigh to his heart's content.

Then he went into the experimental laboratory to see Bill Byrnes. All that Bill said was, "Well?"

Tommy nodded nonchalantly.

"Go on!" said Bill, impatiently.

"Got it!" said Tommy.

"All?"

"Yep!"

"Fine!" said Bill, and Tommy knew he meant it.

"How about you, Bill?"

"Not yet, but soon," replied Bill, with calm assurance. "She vaporizes at higher speed. She's doing over twelve hundred now."

"Great-oh!" cried Tommy, looking at the engine. It was running smoothly.

How could he ever think that any other place was fit for a man, a real man, to live in? How? But he didn't even try to answer his own unanswerable question. He called on La Grange and Nevin and other comrades and conversed joyously

Digitized by Google

with them. Then he went back to Mr. Thompson's office.

Thompson led him into the adjoining room. There on the table were a lot of blue prints. Mr. Thompson showed him the plans and the elevations of the new buildings.

They were wonderful, thought Tommy. He was so glad to see them, so proud of them, that he said:

"Say, Mr. Thompson, what's the reason I can't show these drawings to the men? They'll be quite excited about them—"

"What's your real notion, Tommy?" asked Mr. Thompson, a trifle rebukingly.

Tommy, in point of fact, had assumed only that the men would be as interested as he himself was. How could they help it? But Thompson's question made him instantly perceive Thompsonian possibilities—as perhaps Thompson had meant him to.

"Well, if our men are going to feel like a family we ought to make a family affair out of everything that concerns us all. Let me show them where we are all going to work. In fact, I think I ought to have some information to take to them every day. Then I'll get them used to my job."

Tommy began to see more and more possibilities the more he thought about them.

Digitized by Google

"You see, they will know I'm on the inside, and I'll tell them all I know. That will make them feel they are on the inside, too. And they know I am for them first and last, and will feel—"

"Hold on. Don't get excited. You are taking it for granted that they are all as interested in this as you are."

"Why shouldn't I take it for granted?" challenged Tommy, out of the fullness of his inexperience.

"There is no answer to that, Tommy," said Thompson, gravely. "Why shouldn't you, indeed?"

Tommy looked at Thompson to see if there were a hidden meaning to his words. He saw only a pair of bright, steady, brown eyes full of comprehension.

"Go on," said Thompson.

"I'm going to make them feel that it will be something to work in the new Tecumseh plant long before that plant is ready."

"You'll have to hustle," smiled Thompson. "Work begins Monday."

"Do the men know it?"

"No; I decided only to-day."

"Then let me tell them now, please."

"Go ahead, Tommy." Thompson spoke so seriously that Tommy knew he was on the right track.

Digitized by Google

"What about the drawings?"

"I'll have some printed for you at once," Thompson promised, and Tommy's soul filled with self-confidence.

And it was along those lines that Tommy worked during the days that followed. He made of himself a sort of animated bulletin-board of good news and inside information about the new machinery and the provisions for the comfort and safety of the men in the shops. He told them about the plans under consideration for bonuses and pensions—all in strict confidence—and made it plain to them that it would be a great thing for a man to be able to say that he worked for the Tecumseh Motor Company.

No money-maker past thirty would have dreamed of assuming that the workmen already felt a direct, personal, family interest in the new shop and the new era. He talked to these, his friends, as though they were all Tommy Leighs. It was a nice boy's deed; and the men who very clearly saw his boyishness saw also his sincerity. If they thought that he was mistaken they blamed Thompson for making Tommy believe in dreams. Then they thought it would be a shame if the boy ever discovered the deception. And next they thought perhaps there was no deception on Thompson's part. And, anyhow, they liked Tom-

Digitized by Google

my, and that made them believe Tommy might not be wrong, after all; so that in the end it was not so difficult for them to share his enthusiasm. Of course there were the constitutional skeptics and the peevish sages who asked for impossible details, and the blithe American unbelievers in miracles. But these only made Tommy feel more friendly by making him feel more concerned over their own salvation, which he continued to offer them daily. For this boy had known suffering and fear and the vital need of money with which to purchase peace; and in his craving to do right he took the risk of assuming that people were good.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXII

TOMMY was talking to La Grange, or rather listening to the engineer, who was telling him how Bill Byrnes had become a highbrow scientist. La Grange, whose technical studies had been pursued in this country and abroad, had become a college lecturer for Bill's benefit.

"You wouldn't recognize Bill. Not a peep from him when he is interrupted. He thinks time is no object. I told him yesterday he worked like a man who is paid by the day, with the boss away on a vacation, and he just nodded. He isn't annoyed because he has not yet revolutionized the industry."

"Will he land it, do you think?"

"I don't know. It's promising. I think he is on the right track, but the job seems more difficult to me than to him. Still he seems to have the instinct. Revolutions come and go without revoluting for shucks. There's where Thompson is a wonder. We've been after Thompson to make certain improvements these past two years,

Digitized by Google

and he put us off with pleasant words. He was right—we weren't ready for him. And when we thought that some time in 1925 we'd have a beautiful model, he suddenly informs us that he is now ready. I tell you, Tommy, Thompson—"

An office-boy came in and said to Tommy, "Mr. Thompson wants you."

Tommy, his arm about Freddy's neck—he had hired Freddy—walked to Mr. Thompson's office. His heart was free from care. Bill was happy and at work. La Grange had confirmed his own suspicions of Thompson's genius; work on the foundation of the new plant had begun, and the future was bright.

Thompson was seated at his desk, talking to Grosvenor and Holland, who were standing. As Tommy entered the men looked at him, and started a trifle hastily to leave the room.

Tommy said, "Good afternoon," brightly, and both Holland, the treasurer, and Mr. Grosvenor nodded in reply. Their eyes lingered on Tommy a moment, a look of curiosity and something else besides, something else that Tommy could scarcely call unfriendly, and yet that was not friendly, as if they didn't quite see the Tommy Leigh they used to know.

Mr. Thompson did not look up at Tommy. He was staring at the pen-tray on his desk.

Digitized by Google

"You sent for me, Mr. Thompson?" asked Tommy.

"Yes." Still Thompson did not look up.

The atmosphere of the office suddenly changed for Tommy. It was now full of distinct unfriendliness. It filled him with that depressing curiosity which is half apprehension and grows fearward with every second of silence.

Presently Thompson raised his head and looked at Tommy. In his steady brown eyes there was neither friendliness nor hostility, neither warmth nor coldness. Their expression was what it might have been if he had looked casually at a chair in the corner of the room.

"Leigh," he began, and his use of the surname made Tommy's heart skip a beat, "you have succeeded in making me doubt my ability to read character."

Tommy was certain there was a mistake somewhere. He evolved a dozen theories in a flash, even one that somebody had deliberately planned a trick to ruin him, some devilishly ingenious frame-up.

"H-how is th-that, sir?" asked Tommy, and he could have killed himself for the stammering and the huskiness that made his own voice sound guilty. And Thompson—was Thompson no longer a friend?

Digitized by Google

Thompson looked at Tommy with a meditative expression that had in it enough accusation to make Tommy square his shoulders and look Mr. Thompson full in the eyes.

"I have followed your orders to the best of my ability. You knew how little I knew." Tommy's voice was firm.

"You can't even guess what makes me say what I have said to you?" Thompson's voice did not express incredulity, but it was not pleasant.

"No, sir. I know it's a mistake of some sort, and I am afraid it must be something serious to make you speak the way you do. But I also know I have done nothing since I came here—or before I came here—that I wouldn't tell you."

"Nothing?" persisted Thompson.

"Nothing," said Tommy, firmly, "for which you can hold me personally responsible." There was only one thing that he had not told Thompson, and he was not to blame for it, though he expected to suffer for it and always had expected it.

For the first—and the last—time in his life Tommy actually saw Mr. Thompson shake his head as if puzzled.

"Holland received by express from New York this morning the twenty stock certificates of a hundred shares each made out to John B. Kendrick. A letter came with them from Colonel van

Digitized by Google

Schaick Willetts requesting us to transfer on our books eighteen hundred shares, as per indorsement, to one man, and the new certificates turned over to that one man and a receipt therefor obtained from him and sent to New York. Do you know the name of that one man?"

"No, sir, unless it was Colonel Willetts himself."

"The name," Thompson said, slowly, his eyes fixed on Tommy's, "was Thomas Francis Leigh."

Tommy looked at Thompson in such utter amazement that Thompson looked serious. He hated mysteries, and this mystery doubly irritated him because it concerned his company, and because it concerned one of his pet experiments.

"I see you really don't know what it means. But can't you guess?"

"No, sir," answered Tommy. "Perhaps Colonel Willetts has written to me about it, but I haven't received the letter. Shall I telegraph him? I can't understand it, Mr. Thompson." Tommy was no longer alarmed, only mystified. And he was conscious, notwithstanding the confusion in his mind, of an all-pervading feeling of relief.

Thompson rose from his chair and stood up beside Tommy. "Now, Tommy," he said, "go over the whole thing in your mind from the beginning, step by step."

Digitized by Google

Feeling himself reinstated by the use of his first name, Tommy became calm. "I can't see why he should do it unless he wants to make me personally responsible in some way—"

Thompson shook his head. "It isn't that, Tommy. Would he make you a present of the stock? You know your personal relations with him and his family. He is a very rich man, I understand. The other two hundred shares are to be made out to Rivington Willetts and Marion Willetts."

Tommy thought of how Marion had interested herself in the matter; but not more so than Rivington. The colonel might have given to Tommy a hundred shares; but even so, ten thousand dollars was too big a gift, let alone a hundred and eighty thousand.

"I don't think it possible. I am sure it isn't a gift. He, moreover, promised to interest other friends of mine. I can't understand it."

"Tommy, discard obvious impossibilities, but remember that the improbable is always possible. Think calmly. Take your time and don't look so infernally troubled. Because somebody has transferred a block of stock to you is no sign you have committed a crime."

Tommy started electrically. He recalled his father's vehement desire that his son should not

Digitized by Google

fail to place the stock, his visit to Colonel Willetts's office, notwithstanding Tommy's urgent requests for non-intervention, his insane determination to have Tommy succeed. He remembered also Colonel Willetts's early confession that the deal did not interest him in a business way, and his inexplicable good nature at the second interview; his promise that he would himself see that the stock was apportioned later among Tommy's friends' fathers; the utter unbusiness-like quality of the entire affair. It was all plain to Tommy now. There was only one explanation. His quick imagination proceeded to dramatize it. Then, boy-like, he melodramatized it.

His father had done it. His success in averting discovery for years, by making him feel safe against the danger that Tommy so poignantly dreaded, had made the trusted bank employee play for a last huge stake. To help his son at any cost had become not a habit, but an obsession. A madman had done this. But would the world so consider it?

"Mr. Thompson?" he exclaimed, miserably.

"Yes, my boy."

"I—I—"

"Do you think you know now?"

"N—no. But I—I must return to New York—at once—to-night!"

Digitized by Google

"Can you tell me—"

"I can't because I don't—know for sure." He bit his lip.

Thompson pulled out his pocket-book, took some yellowbacks from it, gave them to Tommy, and said: "A train leaves in forty minutes. Take my car, outside. Get your things. Come back from New York with the explanation. It is time you had it. If there isn't any explanation, come back anyhow. Tell me as much as you please—or nothing at all. It will make no difference to us here. We know you, Tommy, even if I did you an injustice for a moment, though I really couldn't see how I had made a mistake."

"I hope you haven't," said Tommy. The time must come when Thompson would know all.

"And, by the way, I'll take the stock off your hands at a slight—"

"It isn't mine—"

"No matter whose it is, I'll take it at a hundred and five. That will give you or your friends—"

"No, sir. I must find out—"

"You do what I tell you. At a hundred and five—two hundred and ten thousand dollars," said Thompson, sternly. "But you come back here, do you hear? You are becoming really valuable to us. Run along now."

Tommy wrung Thompson's hand, pocketed the

Digitized by Google

hundred dollars his chief had given him and, unable to speak, rushed from the office.

He caught his train, but Dayton was far behind him before he was able to think coherently of the affair. The more calmly he thought, the more certain he became that his father was responsible. It gave him not a new problem to solve, but the conviction that the old problem plus this new phase must be settled once for all. He could not live through another six months like the last.

So he thought of the last six months. He remembered how, after his father's confession, the secret had appeared before him, a flaming sword in its hand. It had driven him out of New York. He had sought respite in Dayton, and there he had become a man, in this new world that was all the world there could now be for him.

The secret, therefore, had given to him not only the will, but the power to fight now. He had Thompson for an ally—Thompson, who had said, "Come back with or without an explanation"; Thompson, who would understand, as no other man could understand, how his father had been prompted to do this evil deed by nothing more evil than a great and unreasoning love. And the great and unreasoning love had changed the mind that could think of nothing but to fulfil at any

Digitized by Google

cost his promises to a dead wife. Oh, Thompson would surely understand!

Yet he could not say that his father was legally insane. He was, in fact, a keen and shrewd man, who had surprised Tommy with his advice as to what he should tell Willetts. But on one subject his father was as irresponsible as a child. That was it—a child. And Tommy found himself reversing their positions, until Mr. Leigh was the son and Tommy the father, whose duty it was to protect the poor boy.

Well, Tommy would tell his father that the stock must be given up and the money refunded, and nobody would be blamed, at least not by Tommy. It was his duty to undo the mischief. Not knowing how it was done, he could not tell how it might be undone. Tommy wished he might ask Thompson for advice. He regretted not having taken Thompson into his confidence; and then ceased to regret it when he considered that he could have given no data of value to Thompson. He would learn the facts and then he could talk to Thompson intelligently. He must do it as quickly as possible, because he was no longer impelled by the fear of what the world might think, but by the conviction that he must do his duty at any cost, in undoing the wrong done to the bank.

Digitized by Google

This new attitude of Tommy's toward the tragedy of his life robbed the secret of most of its terrors. His hands were now clean—and his father's were smeared with love! Motive was everything—Tommy's and Mr. Leigh's. And in excusing his father Tommy did not condone the offense, but did better—forgave it! And the difference between forgiveness this time and the forgiveness he had granted whenever he had thought of his father's love was that this time Tommy forgave after he had determined deliberately to do what might make the secret public property. He was no longer thinking of self.

He arrived shortly after midday on Thursday. His father had not come from the bank. Tommy decided not to call on Colonel Willetts until after he had talked to his father. And he would not seek his father in the bank, although he was so impatient to settle the affair that he found waiting an appalling strain on his overwrought nerves.

All manner of discomforting thoughts assailed him as he waited—thoughts that almost made his resolution waver. Suppose discovery, by some devilish chance, already had come on this very day? Supposing Tommy was too late, and the virtue gone out of his own desire to be himself the one to end the suspense? It would be the final blow if Tommy, in being himself the assassin of his

Digitized by Google

own career, could not thereby save his own soul! Tommy wandered restlessly about the house, going from room to room. He saw his mother's photograph on the library table, and visualized the long and lonely days of the poor old man in this home without a wife, in this house without a son, with no companion save the consciousness of his loneliness and of his deeds—a great love paid for in the fear and the horror of discovery.

"Poor dad!" said Tommy, aloud, and went into his father's bedroom. On the bureau was another photograph of Tommy's mother. And then the long, gray history of the old man unrolled itself even more vividly before the boy's soul, until his throat lumped achingly and the tears came into his eyes. He could not speak; he dared not think. So he passed his hand over his father's pillow instinctively, caressingly, smoothed it and patted it mechanically.

"Poor dad! Poor dad!" he muttered to the ghost of his father that was in the room with him.

He must not speak brutally to his father. He would wait until after supper. Then in the library, very quietly, with his arm about the old bent shoulders, he would say: "Dad, why did you do it a second time? Let us go about it calmly and undo it, so that we may both feel better."

It would be easier than he had feared. It was

Digitized by Google

not so difficult to be square, once you have made up your mind. Tommy felt a great sense of relief. He heard the front door open and close, and he hastened from the library. From the top of the stairs he shouted:

"Hello, dad! Here I am!"

He saw his father start violently and look up, and then he remembered he had not telegraphed. He ran down the stairs with right hand outstretched.

He saw the look of alarm in Mr. Leigh's eyes change to fear, and then to something worse.

"What—what—" gasped the old man.

"Oh, I wanted to see you," said Tommy, and shook his father's icy-cold hand violently.

"Has the company— Have you—lost your position?"

"No."

"Then why are you here?" The old man's voice still betrayed apprehension, but on his face was a stern frown.

"I'll tell you—after supper."

"No, no; I must know at once! What is it, Thomas?"

He walked into the old-fashioned front parlor and confronted his son. Tommy saw the old man who was his father, took in the pale face and the tightly compressed lips.

Digitized by Google

It was a signed confession. His heart sank, but it came back, buoyed on the ocean of love and pity and tenderness that filled his soul.

"Dad," said Tommy, huskily, "I am not blaming you. Nothing that you have done and nothing that you can do can make me forget that I am your son and that you have done it for me—and for my mother."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Leigh, and did not look at his son.

"It's this. Yesterday Mr. Thompson called me in and told me that eighteen hundred shares of Tecumseh stock had been transferred from Kendrick's, Colonel Willetts's confidential clerk, to my name." Tommy looked at his father to see what effect his words might have. Even at the last moment he hoped to see astonishment.

But Mr. Leigh nodded feverishly and said: "Yes, yes! And then what?"

"Mr. Thompson asked me what it meant, so I said I didn't know. I couldn't explain."

"So you couldn't! So you couldn't!" as though he blamed the others for expecting it.

"I was afraid to explain," said Tommy, slowly, "because I assumed it—it was you who did it. Was it, father?"

Tommy tried to speak calmly, in the vain hope that by so doing he would think calmly. But his

Digitized by Google

heart was beating furiously and his very soul within him was in a quiver. And still so strong was hope that Tommy, who had lost hope, hoped his father would deny.

Mr. Leigh said nothing, but stared at Tommy almost blankly.

"Was it, father?"

The old man nodded slowly.

"Why did you do it, dad? Why did you?" asked Tommy, bitterly. Then he remembered what he had decided to do, and his bitterness turned into grief. He approached his father and put an arm about him and repeated, brokenly: "Oh, dad, why did you do it? Why did you?"

He felt a great shudder run through the old shoulders, and that made him clasp them the tighter.

"I—I felt you deserved it, Thomas. And I thought you—you would like it."

"How could you think such a thing when you knew how I felt about the money you had—you had spent for me, that I was trying to pay back?"

"I thought only," said the old man, in the dispirited monotone that Tommy now associated with a confession of guilt and an attempt to excuse the inexcusable, "that your mother would have been so proud of you, a stockholder in the company, an owner as well as an employee, earn-

Digitized by Google

ing your wages like an honest man." Mr. Leigh nodded to himself again and again.

"But, father, how could I allow it? How could you think—"

"I am your father. Willetts would take only the two hundred shares he had promised to take for his children. I knew your heart was set upon raising the money, and that you would have been disappointed with your certain failure with your other friends, so I—I told Willetts to subscribe for the whole two thousand shares and to tell you he would distribute them later. I would take the rest. I knew you wanted it, Thomas. And being himself a father, he understood. I spoke to some friends and they were willing, but they were not your friends; and then I thought, 'Why shouldn't my only son own that stock himself?' And so it's your stock. It's paid for and nobody can take it away from you." He paused. Then he repeated. "Nobody can take it away from you!" and looked defiantly at his only son.

Tommy's heart sank; but he shook his head kindly and, as one speaks to a child, said: "Well, I'll have to give it up. Mr. Thompson said he would buy the stock back himself—"

"Certainly not!" interrupted Mr. Leigh, decidedly.

"At an advance of five per cent., father."

Digitized by Google

"Certainly not. It's your stock, bought and paid for—"

The stubborn look on Mr. Leigh's face made Tommy interrupt sternly:

"Yes, but paid for with what money?"

The old man started. He seemed suddenly to remember something now for the first time. He waved his hand as though he were brushing away an annoying insect. Then he said, firmly:

"Willetts got his money. It was arranged that the stock would be transferred to whatever name I gave him. He didn't give the money to you. I gave it to him—a hundred and eighty thousand dollars, as I had agreed."

Tommy was so sure now that he was right in all he had surmised that his own resolutions came back to him. He looked at his father steadily and forgivingly. What he had planned to do must be done. The secret must become public property. Then the agony would be ended.

"I understand perfectly, dad; but it makes a difference where the money came from."

"It came from your father," retorted Mr. Leigh, sternly.

"Yes, I know all that. But where did my father get it?" said Tommy, patiently.

The old man took a step toward his son and checked himself abruptly.

Digitized by Google

"I took it," he spoke in a low voice, "from the bank."

Tommy's heart stopped beating. He had known there could be no other explanation, and yet this was really the first as it was the final confirmation. That his father was not in his right mind Tommy knew now. Long years of brooding—and the habit of taking! Unfortunate success in averting discovery had made him feel safe. Tommy craved to ask Thompson for advice. If Thompson were only here he would know what questions to ask and what remedies to suggest. If Thompson were only in New York!

But he wasn't and Tommy was, and Tommy must fight alone. He must fight the president of the bank—but not his own father!

"Then we'll have to put the money back in the bank, dad—don't you see?"

"Put it back?" repeated Mr. Leigh.

"Certainly. There is nothing else for us to do. And the question now is how must we go about it so that—so that we can put it back?" Tommy carefully included himself in the operation, because he wished his father to know that he considered himself just as guilty. They stood together in this.

"Why must we put it back?" persisted Mr. Leigh.

Digitized by Google

Tommy checked his impatience and answered, "Because you took it from the bank—"

The look of grim resolution that Tommy had often seen came into his father's face. The fight must be against senile stubbornness!

"I took it from the bank"—and the old man's voice, belying his grimly resolute look, sank to a whisper—"because I had it on deposit there. It was idle."

"Huh?" grunted Tommy.

"It was drawing no interest, and I could think of no better investment than to devote it to my only son's happiness," finished Mr. Leigh, quietly.

"What are you saying, father?" cried Tommy. And then his sudden hope burst into pieces and vanished. His father was insane; his words furnished irrefutable proof. Tommy realized he must do nothing in a hurry. He must telephone to Thompson.

"I am saying that I had no better use for the money, and so I bought the Tecumseh stock for you. A great deal of money has been made in automobile manufacturing, and all my advices were that your friend Thompson was a man of high character and undoubted business ability."

Tommy's mind was in a daze. This came from trying to think of too many things too quickly, and at the same time trying not to let an un-

Digitized by Google

warranted sense of relief fill his soul, as it was violently seeking to do. He shook his head; and then he blinked his eyes again and again and stared at his father, gradually realizing that his father's eyes were not gleaming insanely. Indeed, he now perceived that they were looking at him, curiously proud and most curiously diffident.

"I don't understand—" began Tommy, with an impatient shake of the head.

"And you never will, my son," interrupted Mr. Leigh, gently. "I pray God you never will!"

The words were so incomprehensible that Tommy asked, excitedly:

"Father, won't you please tell me about the money? Was it yours or the bank's; and what—"

"Mine—*in* the bank. Did you think it was not mine, Thomas?" The old man looked at his son, and Tommy could see neither reproach nor accusation in his father's eyes.

"What else could I think?" said Tommy. "What else have I thought—"

Mr. Leigh held up a hand to check his son's speech.

"Wait! Remember my exact words. When I told you what my salary from the bank was and how you had cost me seventeen thousand dollars, you asked me how I did it."

"Yes. And you said—"

Digitized by Google

"Wait! I asked you in return what an old and trusted bank employee usually did when he spent more than he received from the bank."

"Yes; but you knew I naturally understood—"

"Wait! You assumed, as you say, naturally, that I had taken the money from the bank."

"What else—"

"That I had stolen the money?"

"What else could I think when you—"

"Wait! And so, my son, all these months in Dayton your thought was that you were the son of a thief?"

"There was no other—" began Tommy with an impersonal indignation that rang in his voice.

"Wait! I have another question to ask you, Thomas. All these months, have you loved that thief?" Mr. Leigh looked at Tommy with eyes so fiercely hungry that Tommy answered very quickly:

"Of course I did." Then he added, huskily: "Sure thing, daddy. But it was—"

"Wait!" interrupted Mr. Leigh, very sternly now. "Since we are talking on this subject you might as well hear me out. God bless you, my son, for that love. I can tell you now what I feared I might never be able to tell you. I can tell you, because you loved me when I was not worthy of your love." There was a pause. Then

Digitized by Google

Mr. Leigh looked at Tommy unflinchingly and said, "Thomas, you *are* the son of a thief!"

The world once more crashed down about Tommy's head. His breath failed him. Darkness came. But as a stricken man might say it, with his last breath, Tommy said:

"I don't care! You are my father—"

"I am your father, yes," said Mr. Leigh, gravely. "And for that reason, in order that you may live your own life wisely, I should like to tell you all. Will you listen patiently, my son, while I make my confession?"

In his father's voice Tommy detected a pleading note that went to his heart and increased the boy's agony.

"Yes, father," said Tommy Leigh, wearily, "I'll listen."

"My son, I loved your mother as I pray you may love your wife. But I loved you also—as she did—even before you came to us, her love compelling mine. And when she went from us, my son, I did not follow her, because my love for her, which had not died, made me live in order that I might do as she had planned for me to do—devote my life to my son, who also was hers. In you she lived and I lived, feeling her near me. You will not understand this, my son; you cannot, having no sons—not having one son who

Digitized by Google

meant so much more to me than merely *my* son—*her* son! No, you cannot understand."

Mr. Leigh looked meditatively at his son and shook his head, slowly. But Tommy said:

"Yes, I can, dad!"

"No, my son, for in you I saw the accomplishment of her desires, the fulfilment of her wishes. It meant life—the opportunity for my love to continue to be what it always was; not a withered flower on her grave, Thomas, but a blossom perennially fresh! Through you I could talk to her in the one language that I knew she would hear and would understand. And so all my thoughts were of her because they were all of you—as hers had been, my son, long before her eyes had seen your baby face; as they doubtless are this minute!"

The old man rose abruptly, walked to the window and stared out of it a long time, his arms folded tightly across his breast. And Tommy, feeling within his inmost soul the reverberation of the words he had heard, sat there, his soul awestruck by the intensity of his own feelings; the words that regrouped themselves into phrases that sounded unreal—not stilted, but unreal, as though no living man could utter them with living lips.

And then Tommy realized that the father to whom he had felt it his duty to be loyal was not

Digitized by Google

the man who had spoken in the voice and in the language of a man from another world. Therefore, it was plain to Tommy now that he had not loved his father with a true instinct, but rather from the force of convention and habit. And this growing conviction gave to Tommy an uncomfortable sense of aloofness from real love, not entirely of his own making, but for which he was responsible. Real love would have divined such a love as this.

"Father!" cried Tommy, and approached the old man, who was staring out of the window, unseeingly.

Mr. Leigh turned, and Tommy saw that his face was composed. The pallor was still there, but it did not have quite the same unhealthy aspect. And when Mr. Leigh motioned him to a chair Tommy perceived that he wished to say more and say it calmly. So Tommy sat down and tried to look calm. But the smile on the boy's lips was not so encouraging as he meant it to be by reason of the tremulousness of the lips. The old man sat beside him and spoke gently.

"At the bank my thoughts were only of the close of day when I could talk to your mother—through you, my son. I made mistakes in my work and was reproved—and forgiven by the president, who had known her and knew what

Digitized by Google

she had been to me. And as you grew older and the time drew nearer for carrying out the plans she had formed for your upbringing, I realized suddenly the danger that confronted both you and me, a danger so insidious and withal so great that it unnerved me. And that danger, my son, was my love for you."

He paused and frowned. He nodded to himself grimly, at the recollection of the danger. But when he looked at his son's face, he ceased to frown and went on, earnestly, as if he would not only explain, but defend himself.

"That love, I saw clearly, could make me false to her as well as to you, and, therefore, to myself. I saw that I was bound to be the greatest sufferer, for my punishment would be a regret more bitter than death. But when I realized it I asked her to understand why I would do what I must do to save you from me. That was, my boy, to keep my love for you under control—a thing impossible to all but a man who loved, as I did, two in one. You were four years old at the time and cannot remember, but I spoke to you. I asked you to become the telephone through which I might speak to your mother, who was in heaven, waiting for both of us. You were very glad, I remember, and I held your hand to my ear and I whispered to you to tell her that I would keep my promise

Digitized by Google

to her. You repeated the words after me. And—and—I kept my promise, my son!"

The old man nodded to himself, oblivious of his big son's presence, as Tommy could see. The boy's hand reached for his father's and the old man clutched it tightly.

"Have—have you understood so far, my boy?" he asked, softly.

"Yes, dad. And I can't tell you how I feel—as if I had never loved you before. But now—"

"Wait until you have heard all," commanded Mr. Leigh.

"No matter what you did—" began Tommy, firmly.

"Wait! So that very day I changed my outward attitude toward you. You will never know what I suffered when I moved your crib and made you sleep in your own room, you who had never been away from my side a moment in this house. You asked me why, and I told you that you were a big man now and must be brave and sleep in your own bed in your own room, like a man. And you agreed—so bravely, my boy! And I told you that thereafter we must shake hands when we said good night, knowing that if I kissed you I could not let you go! I never kissed you good night after that—always shook hands. But before I went to bed, when you were asleep, I would

Digitized by Google

go to your little bed and I'd bend down and put my lips as close to your cheek as I could without touching it—to learn to be undemonstrative in my affection." The old man ceased to talk, looked up suddenly, and said, grimly, "I am telling this so that you may understand what follows."

"I don't care what follows," cried Tommy. "No matter what you did—"

"Wait! So I began to acquire self-control by teaching myself to be undemonstrative, and I succeeded. But as the time came for me to begin to think of your boarding-school I saw an insurmountable obstacle in the way of keeping my promise to your mother. She had picked out expensive schools that had grown even more expensive. I had no money, but I resolved that you should go, no matter how or where I got the money. My salary would not enable me to do it, so the problem was how to get the money. I couldn't see how I could get it by working harder, and I could not obtain a better position. I knew there was much money in the world, and while brooding on how little I had I decided that if I couldn't get it in any other way I would take it from the bank. I needed very little, and, moreover, it was not for myself. Oh yes," said the old man, wearily, "I fought against it—fought not so much against my conscience as against my love

Digitized by Google

for your mother and my love for you; and both urged me to disregard my inhibitions. It was love, not envy or greed, that made me decide to take the money from the bank. I did not seek self-extenuation. I rejected cowardly compromises. I did not tell myself that I would borrow the money. I would take it and pay for your education. Beyond that there was no need to think. I feared your mother would not approve, but I did not talk to her about that—only that you would have what she had always wished you to have. But my concern was to insure the payment of your bills for ten years. I did not wish to steal a large sum and run away, because then I could not live in this house where she had lived with me. So I must successfully cover my operations over several years. By not thinking of it as a crime I was able to think exclusively of how to do it without danger of detection."

The old man paused. When he went on it was more calmly. "It was a difficult and complicated problem, one of the hardest that I have ever faced, but in time I found how I could solve it. I went over my solution methodically and painstakingly, checking up every possible contingency, until I knew it was perfect. The accumulated wisdom and experience of generations of experts had gone to providing safeguards, but I saw how

Digitized by Google

human ingenuity, directed by love, could foil human ingenuity when directed merely by the desire to retain possession. And at last, knowing that your education would be fully provided for by my action, I made up my mind to take the money from the bank when the time came."

Mr. Leigh paused. Then, speaking very slowly and deliberately, his eyes fixed unblinkingly on Tommy's, he went on: "And so, my son, that I might keep my promise to her, that you might have what she had wished you to have and what I wished you to have because she had wished it, I lost all sense of right and wrong as men understand it, I sloughed off my inhibitions and forgot the teachings of God—and I stole the money I needed! I was a thief!"

"But did you—" began Tommy, tremblingly.

"I became a thief," interrupted Mr. Leigh, sternly, "when I decided to steal, with my eyes wide open to the consequences and my heart full of joy over being able to give you what I wished. Therefore, you are the son of a thief, even though the thief didn't physically steal the money."

"You didn't?" cried Tommy, chokingly.

"My son, if my mind was the mind of a thief and my heart was the heart of a thief, am I not guilty of having been a thief?"

"No!" shouted Tommy, very loudly.

Digitized by Google

"Oh yes! My pocket did not hold the stolen money. But my heart held the sin—"

"Nonsense!" cried Tommy. "Your heart held only love."

"And theft!" And Mr. Leigh nodded to himself, affirmatively.

"Very well. If you are a thief I am one, too."

"No, Thomas. Being a boy, with a boy's mind and a boy's fears, you are assuring yourself that technically you are not the son of a thief. You are beyond the reach of the law of the land, but I am none the less a thief. I tell you I took two thousand dollars a year from the bank for ten years, undetected. I stole it and was glad of it to the extent that I had made detection humanly impossible. I never"—and Mr. Leigh smiled, grimly—"went so far as to feel an artist's pride over my exploit. Indeed, at times I rather regretted the necessity of violating the trust reposed in me, for without that trust all my cleverness would have availed nothing. But I tell you that money was in my pocket. I felt it there for many, many years. Your father was a thief as surely as if a jury had found him guilty."

"And if a jury did his son wouldn't," said Tommy, eagerly. "And if anybody calls me the son of a thief I'll admit it—with pride!"

"Boy, boy, you do not understand," said Mr.

Digitized by Google

Leigh, in a low voice. "You cannot know what it cost me. But I do not begrudge the cost!"

"That's what you said, that made me so certain that you had—" Tommy checked himself abruptly.

"That I had stolen the money? Well, I did, Thomas," said Mr. Leigh, firmly.

Tommy smiled forgivingly and said, "Tell me now how you did not steal the money that you spent on me, won't you?"

"Well, when I saw how, without being discovered, I could take the money, as soon as I was ready I studied in turn the bank's problem—how to make it impossible for anybody to steal money; and I found a way of preventing not only my theft, but other thefts by other people in other positions. And then, because I wondered why people studied so hard how to make money and so little how to keep it, I began to study how to make it. I analyzed some of the bank's most profitable deals and the operations of our most successful financiers. I saw what capital with brains could do alone; and then what capital without brains, and then what brains without capital could do. I found it was not difficult for brains to make money the moment capital was made aware of the existence of brains.

"Then I studied opportunities—and found

Digitized by Google

them. So I went to the president, who was a personal friend, but too busy to remember personal friends except in his private office, and had a long talk with him. A special position was made for me. I changed our system of accounts, introduced methods and checks that are now in use in nearly all the big banks, and I became an adviser in certain deals. It seems I had some gifts in that direction, my son, peculiar to myself and therefore, I feared, not transmissible to my son. And—well, I made much more than I had intended to steal; and made it much more easily. But I kept my nominal salary from the bank exactly what it had been, twenty-five hundred dollars a year, that I might continue to be an old and trusted employee—to remind me of what I might have been! It was not hard to make money. I studied money-making in order not to want to kiss you—you were about eight then—and I devoted myself to evolving financial plans for a certain group of capitalists associated with our bank. It was the only way in which I could love you with safety to myself and to you. But I prospered so much that I brought upon your head and mine a second danger, far greater than the love of a father, who, though too weak to refuse you anything, was too poor to give you the easiest way to perdition." The old man looked

Digitized by Google

sternly at his son. "It was the danger of being the son of a rich man—the same man, but rich!"

"And is that why at college you always sent what I asked for?"

"I couldn't help sending you what you asked me for. The moment you asked I had to send it, my son. But my salvation lay in realizing my helplessness. I kept close tabs on you at college through friends you could not suspect, and because the reports were not alarming I did not disturb you. I merely fought against my desire to give you more than you asked for, to give you what I could easily afford to give you, what would have given me pleasure to do by giving pleasure to you. I fought that desire—and wrote to you about your studies and never mentioned money, for I did not wish to lie to you. Do you know why, after you were twelve, you didn't spend your vacation with me? Because I knew that if you did I could never let you go away from me, and I knew you must go back to the school your mother had picked out for you. I wanted to give you tutors, to keep you at home; and that would not have been good for you and I should have broken my promise. I knew if I let myself go I'd be lost forever."

Mr. Leigh's lips, which he tried to compress, were quivering. Then he tried to smile, reassur-

Digitized by Google

ingly, to convince his son that he had not let himself go after all.

The old man drew in a deep breath and said, with a pitiful attempt at playfulness: "That is why I called you Thomas, always Thomas. Now that you are a man you are Thomas. But you never will know how Thomas sounded to me when you were ten! When I heard other people call you Tommy I envied them, for I didn't dare! I didn't dare!"

Tommy irrepressibly rose from his chair and stood beside his father, who thereupon rose. And Tommy threw his arms about his father, as a boy does when he seeks the comfort of his mother's love.

"Dad! Dad! Poor dad!"

"Tommy! Tommy! Tommy!" muttered Mr. Leigh, brokenly. "You are a man now and I can't spoil you by calling you Tommy! I can't can I? My son! Oh, my son, Tommy!"

"You can call me anything you please," said Tommy, brokenly, "so long as you call me your son." Tommy was patting the old man's heaving shoulders protectingly. "It's all right, dad." Then Tommy, he knew not why, said: "Call me anything, father! You don't know how much I love you!"

"Let us be men, my son," said Mr. Leigh,

Digitized by Google

disengaging Tommy's arms from about his neck. "Sit down and let us finish our business."

Mr. Leigh sat down. His hands were trembling, and his face was wet with tears.

"Daddy, you must not lose your grip like that. It's all right," said Tommy, brokenly, unaware that his own face was wet.

"After all these years," muttered Mr. Leigh, "I—I couldn't help it, Thomas—Tommy boy." His eyes were moist with tears and very bright with a feverish excitement. "Well, let us finish. While I had taken pains never to let you know I was a rich man—I am not really very rich—I had never spoken to you about a profession. You did not show a special liking for any, and after your graduation the decision as to what you should do with your life confronted me. I wasn't interested in your business success, but it seemed to me that you ought to do more than merely take care of what I should leave you. I knew that, barring accidents, I should live until you were old enough to become the sort of man you would be after I died.

"I didn't want you an idler, not even a nice, decent idler with gentlemanly manners and harmless hobbies. And there was also the danger that a rich man's son might become what so many nice boys have become, not entirely through any fault

Digitized by Google

of their own or even of their parents, but from not having something useful to do. I wanted to see you become a man. I wanted you to have all the advantages of a boy who has his own way to make, and I didn't know how. I could not make any argument of mine convincing enough to myself to induce you to act as though you were penniless. I didn't wish to make poverty your spur, but I wanted you to be a poor boy, without my having to refuse you money when I had so much that I craved to give you if only I could give it safely! So I studied my problem as I do any business problem. I must do what should bring out what was best and manliest in you; something to prove whether you were pure gold or merely yellow.

"So—I—I tested you, my son—an awful test almost beyond my strength. You will forgive me if I have embittered some months of your life. But I suffered more than you—much more, Tommy! Suffered from your absence, for I saw that you were a man the moment I saw how you took my—my confession that dreadful morning. But you were a rich man's son and I had to save you from your own father! The love that had made me a thief might easily make me a fool!" Tommy shook his head, but his father continued: "Every time you sent me those remittances from

Digitized by Google

Dayton—Tommy, Tommy, they nearly killed me! But I allowed you to think that you were the son of a thief and that you had to make good my crime, knowing that if you behaved like a man then, you would be a man after you discovered that you did not have to pay back that money. And you are a man, aren't you, Tommy?"

Tommy was conscious of a feeling of relief so great, of a new love so strong, of a gratitude so deep and a happiness so all-pervading, that there was no room for regret over what he had gone through when the secret held a flaming sword over his bare head. Then came poignant remorse that he had never even dimly realized how great was this love of which his father had spoken. A man's soul had been bared utterly before Tommy's gaze—a thing no man can do except under the compulsion of a love unutterably great. Something was due to that man and the naked soul of him.

"Father," said Tommy, bravely confessing his own misdeed, "I want to tell you one thing. It may hurt you, but I want you to know it. I never loved you before. I don't think I was really your son until to-day."

"Oh yes, you were," said Mr. Leigh, hastily. "Yes, you were—my son and your mother's! And now I can talk to you about her as much as

Digitized by Google

I wish. I had not dared before. But tell me—what about Dayton? Are you going back?"

Tommy for the first time realized that he was a rich man's son. There was no need to pay back the seventeen thousand dollars. There was no need to work for wages. But—well, his father would decide and he would do whatever his father wished. He owed it to his father.

"I don't know. What do you want me to do, dad?"

Mr. Leigh could not help seeing Tommy's loving loyalty.

"What do you wish to do, my son?" he asked, eagerly.

"Whatever you say," answered Tommy, firmly.

"No! No!" Mr. Leigh shook his head violently. "It is for you to decide, Thomas." Then he began to snap his fingers, nervously.

"Well, dad," said Tommy, slowly, "now that I have found you I don't want to leave you, somehow."

"Don't you, Tommy?" cried the old man, eagerly. He rose and approached his son with outstretched hands. "Don't you really?"

Tommy saw his father's quivering hands and the light of a great love in his eyes.

"I certainly do not! But—" He shook his head.

Digitized by Google

"But what?" asked Mr. Leigh, halting suddenly.

"Well, I think I ought to go back to Dayton." Tommy thought of the shop, thought of how he might accomplish what Thompson had wanted him to do, what he now could accomplish far more easily. "There's work there that I want to do, dad, and—"

"And what?"

"Well, I want to do it. It's a man's job, and I need not think of the money now, but give myself up to it. But why can't you come with me?" He brightened happily. "How about it?"

But Mr. Leigh said, slowly: "Do you want to go back to Dayton?"

"I do and I don't. I want to be with you and I want to be in Dayton."

"But you will go to Dayton?"

"After awhile, if—if you'll let me."

Mr. Leigh's lips came together firmly as if he would force himself to be silent.

"I do not begrudge the cost, my son!" said Mr. Leigh, in a voice that rang with gratitude. "I am very happy, for if you had not been what you are—"

"Dinner is ready, sorr," announced Maggie.

"Come on, dad," said Tommy, taking his father's arm in his and finding great comfort in feeling it so near him.

Digitized by Google

But Mr. Leigh disengaged his arm gently.

"My son, will you invite me to dine with you at your club? You are a man now, and safe, and—and—I should like to be your guest before you go back to Dayton!"

THE END

JAN 22 1920

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google